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THE PSALTER

IN LIFE, WORSHIP AND HISTORY

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THE PSALTER
IN LIFE, WORSHIP AND HISTORY

By

ADAM C. WELCH, D.D.

¶ *The Psalter and Nature*

¶ *The Psalter and History*

¶ *The Psalter and Worship*

¶ *The Psalter and the Inner Life*

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To

F. C. W. AND A. M. W.

PREFACE

The substance of this little book was read as a series of lectures to the Vacation School for Old Testament Study in King's College Hostel during September 1925. In consenting to the desire for their publication, I have been chiefly influenced by the recognition that some of the positions advanced, and notably the entire view of the relation between the Psalter and the cult, appeared to be novel to many who heard the lectures. The fact merely serves to emphasize that the greatest need in Old Testament exegetical literature is a modern hand-book or commentary on the Psalter, which would bring within the reach of English readers some knowledge of the work which has been done in recent years on this book, both in Great Britain and abroad.

In preparing the material for publication, I have judged it better for several reasons to retain the original lecture-form ; but I have taken the opportunity to develop some of the studies a little more adequately than was possible within the limits of lectures. The principal difficulty in connexion with this supplementary material has been to keep it

within limits. One was continually torn between the desire to substantiate certain positions which touch on large burning questions, especially in Lecture IV, and the need to recognize that the book is not a treatise on Old Testament religion.

It may be useful to add that the divine name, Yahweh, has been employed as seldom as possible. The word is ugly and cacophonous. It has only been introduced where it was necessary to mark the distinctive sense of the God of Israel in contrast with all others.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help of one of my students, George S. Gunn, M.A., who has verified all the references and has prepared the index.

A. C. WELCH.

New College,
Edinburgh.

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I

THE PSALTER AND NATURE

THERE are two things of a general character which it is wise and even necessary, not only to recognize, but to bear steadily in mind, whenever we think about the nature-psalms and about the whole idea of nature in the psalter.

The first is that we are dealing with a world which has no real conception of laws of nature. The result is that God is brought into association with nature, and especially is conceived as directly controlling nature, in a way which has ceased to be possible for minds trained in modern methods of thought. Not only is it said that God created the world: 'the sea is His and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land' (95 : 5). But the psalter is able to declare about the sea: 'He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waves thereof. Then men cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still' (107 : 25, 28 f.). There the sense is that the storm is turned into a calm by the direct fiat of the Almighty, because He has heard the men's prayers and has had mercy on them. Again it is said: 'He turneth rivers into a wilderness

and watersprings into a thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salt desert because of the wickedness of them that dwell therein' (107 : 33 f.). We should probably feel ourselves compelled to trace some connexion between the wickedness and the change which befalls the habitation of the sinners. We might perhaps suggest that the wickedness led to mutual hatred and strife which brought it about that the men neglected the irrigation of their fields or otherwise interfered with what speeds the peasant's plough. They had ignored or interfered with the laws which make for successful agriculture, and without obedience to which fields return to desert. The psalmist was not thinking along these lines at all. To all the psalmists God acts directly ; and by them deeds are ascribed to God, the sharp immediacy of which we conceive ourselves able to escape, because we say that He has permitted them according to the laws to which He has subjected His action in the universe. But sometimes it must be confessed we merely succeed in slurring the question by ignoring that a law of nature can be no more than the divine method of working.

This general principle, which applies no more to the Hebrews than to all the ancient world, is of course generally recognized ; but its far-reaching influence is not always kept clearly in mind. Yet, in any thought on nature in the psalter, it must never be forgotten.

The second thing which needs to be remembered in all study of the psalter is that we are in the East, and specially in Palestine. This means that the conception of kindly mother-nature holds no great or real place in the thought of its writers. For the desert was at the men's door: and God made the desert, a land of barrenness and of death. Men die in the desert from want: it cannot support man's life. Yet it was always there, impressing men's imagination through its immutable sterility and sombre vastness. And God made it what it was.

Even inside Palestine there were tracts of land which could not sustain life. And, where cultivation was possible, men lived, especially in that early period, in constant presence of the possibility of drought with its resultant famine. For Palestine like North Africa lives at the mercy of the rain. If men are to store and use the water which may be over-abundant at one season and lacking at another, Palestine, again like North Africa, needs peace and security. North Africa remained the granary of Italy and became the centre of the rich Christian civilization which gave Tertullian and Cyprian and Augustine to the world, so long as Rome's hand was strong and the imperial city could maintain the *pax Romana*. For with the Roman peace went security; and with security went invested capital; and through invested capital came reservoirs and irrigation-works to store the torrents and keep back the

desert. When Rome fell, all the works its peace had made possible vanished, the desert came back, and North Africa lapsed from European civilization.

Palestine, during the period of Israel's history, was the war-bridge between Asia and Africa, the Belgium of the two contending empires on the Euphrates and the Nile. Being this, it never had any pax or any security. It lived on the mercy of the rain. The result is that in Abraham's time and in Ahab's, in the period of Amos and in that of Jeremiah, we hear of recurrent drought and resultant famine. Haggai again speaks of the same conditions harassing the returned exiles.

The land lived on an uncertain rainfall, and the rain to the psalmists was the immediate gift of God. It is necessary to realize this in its poignant directness if justice is to be done to their vivid sense that in this matter they lived by the grace of their God. Thus, it is only when the situation is realized that full justice can be done to sayings like these : 'He blesseth them, so that they are multiplied greatly, and He suffereth not their cattle to decrease' (107 : 38). 'The Lord shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield her increase' (85 : 12). 'The Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation. I will bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread' (132 : 13, 15). These things, outward, physical things, are the direct evidence of the grace of God.

Nature may have come to seem to us the indifferent theatre on which our real life, which is our spiritual life, is acted out. We are apt to believe that, if only men are diligent in their work and if they can refrain from exploiting each other, the world will give to every man a place and a sufficient nurture for his service of God. To the psalmists nature is only beneficent so long as it pleases God to make and keep it so. For part of nature is the desert, and there men starve. Even in the good land of Palestine the rains may fail; and again men starve.

Without constant recognition of this attitude of mind it becomes impossible to appreciate many prayers in the psalter for what appear at first to be purely physical benefits. All these things are to the writers in the hands of God to be given or withheld as He pleases. He sends sickness, He sends drought, He sends locusts, He sends blight or caterpillar. And men who believe in His direct control over these things and also in His care for their lives pray as naturally for health and rain and good harvests, as they pray for help to know and do their God's will. The men conceive the gift or the withholding of these physical benefits to be as directly the evidence of the divine mind to them as any spiritual gift of guidance or reproof. Their prayers are the natural outcome of the conditions in which they lived and of the lines along which they thought about God's control of His World.

But nature is more to them than the creation of the Almighty, more too than an instrument which He employs for blessing and for discipline. In itself it contains something of the mind of Him who made it and who can use it to serve His ends. 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork' (19 : 1). 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap, He layeth up the depths in storehouses' (33 : 6 f.). These are no mere dead things which owe their existence to God : they all serve Him. For they are the expression of His mind, and as such declare His glory. Thus in the theophany of the thunderstorm 'the voice of the Lord is upon the waters, the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness' (29 : 3, 5, 8). He reveals Himself in His majesty through the process of nature, to subdue what defies the power of man, the sea, the mountains, the wilderness. And, when He has thus put forth His power and subdued what man cannot, the issue is that everything in His heavenly temple saith glory. For this revelation of His might in the world also serves His glory. Nature expresses and embodies something of the mind of Him who made it and who, because it reveals something of His mind, continues to uphold it. There is something

sacramental in all its processes, the firmament, the silent speech of the circling stars, even the crashing weight of a thunderstorm. Nature to the psalmists is not the mere theatre on which man lives out his petty or august destiny. It also expresses the mind and serves the purpose of Him who made it and without whom it cannot continue.

This attitude of the psalter to nature forms the needed corrective to the prophets' violent polemic against Baalism. In their keen sense of the personality of God and their consequent insistence on the ethical character of religion, the prophets ran the risk of introducing a dualism between man and nature. They were driven into exaggeration in order to deliver their people from a mere nature-religion. Yet the nature-religions, of which Baalism was one, held a truth which also needed to be recognized, the truth that man is part of nature and that all nature reveals God.

What, then, does the world express of the divine mind? It reveals, says the writer of psalm 29, His power; and that power is not governed by mere caprice. The psalm opens in the heavenly courts with a vision of בני אלים bringing their adoration to their sovereign. It is not easy to find an adequate translation for the two Hebrew words. 'Sons of the mighty', which is the R.V. rendering, is too colourless: 'sons of God', which is offered in the margin, is too definite in English. As בני אדם

sons of man, is used for human beings, so בני אלים seems intended to mark the superhuman character of the beings to whom it is applied. I prefer to translate: 'Give unto the Lord, ye heavenly powers, give unto the Lord glory and praise.' It is His due, since He is their Lord and the Lord of all. How greatly He is sovereign, dominating all, the psalmist expresses in a theophany which describes the divine appearance in a thunderstorm. With singular felicity he pictures in quick staccato phrases how the voice of the Lord, קול יהוה, breaks over the world. The recurrent phrase, Kōl Yahweh, runs through the verses like clap after clap of thunder, and has always reminded me of Byron's description, 'from peak to peak the echoing crags among leaps the live thunder.' Before this tremendous manifestation of the divine power, the sea, the mountains, the desert—all those things which, as has been already noted, man cannot subdue—are forced to tremble. Nothing in the world can resist the Lord in His majesty. And let it be noted that what is insisted on is not any revelation of the divine anger. This idea is largely taken from the description of the theophany, but, in order to be taken from it, it must first be read into it. For throughout there is no mention of the divine wrath, nor is there a hint of any enemies or opponents against whom this anger is directed. Indeed the opposite is more than suggested, since the psalmist describes the wilderness

of Kadesh as trembling before the advent of the theophany. Evidently what is in his mind is the thought of Sinai and the revelation which took place at Sinai. Now the revelation at Sinai with the theophany which accompanied it was not in anger. For there the Lord manifested Himself in majesty to make Israel the covenanted nation and to bless His people with well-being.

In the end, accordingly, the psalmist returns to the heavenly palace, where after the divine self-revelation everything saith glory. All who are there can say it, because they know what has been in His mind through it all. For they know that the Lord sitteth king over the flood, yea sitteth king for ever that He may bless His people with well-being. All the divine might in the world of nature serves His purpose, and His purpose is the well-being of His people. The majority of commentators, it is true, lop off the last two verses as a mere liturgical addition. By so doing, they merely succeed in leaving the previous description a meaningless torso and in missing the point of the entire psalm. What the writer has in his mind is that this apparently meaningless phenomenon in nature is a self-manifestation of God's transcendent power, and this power is not governed by caprice but is always obedient to His purpose. Those who can say glory, when they witness it, are those who, being admitted to His court, know that which is in His mind. They

are the heavenly powers who are privileged to share the knowledge that what governs the world is a mind which desires the well-being of His people.

The biologist, Haeckel, is reported to have said that, if he were permitted to put one question to the powers in whose hand the world lies, he would wish to ask whether the universe is friendly. That, of course, is the ultimate question, and it is the one which is in the mind of the psalmist. To him and his like there is only one possible answer, the answer, not of knowledge, but of faith. Nature, even in its mightiest and most capricious phenomena, does not obey caprice : it serves the purpose of One, whose glory it is to bless His people with well-being.

The matter is carried a little farther, though expressed in a very different form, in another nature-psalm, viz. the eighth. The writer stands in wondering awe before the greatness of the world, especially before the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained. He recognizes the littleness and the apparent impotence of man amid these stupendous evidences of the power of God. What is man that God, who created and who controls all these, should stoop to think about him at all ? And he answers his own thought by the recognition that God not only has a mind to man, but a special mind beyond what He shows to nature. Thou hast made him but little lower than God : Thou hast put all things under his feet (vv. 5 f.).

One could wish that the writer had developed a little more plainly what he exactly meant by these words, and especially how he conceived all things to be put under man. But we are dealing with a religious poem, not with a theological treatise, and must be content to guess at the full meaning of what is given us.

But there is present something which brings to mind Pascal's saying about man that, while he is only a reed, he is a thinking reed. He is so unique that, even if the universe crushed him like any other reed, it would bring to an end something which it could not replace. Where the difference between the two thinkers chiefly shows itself is that the Hebrew is even more Calvinistic than the Jansenist. To Pascal man's power of thought, which set him apart in the universe, appeared to be something which belonged to him by nature and was inherent in his very being. Thinking thus, he could set man and the universe apart, as though they were naturally and fundamentally separate. The Hebrew conceives of that which makes man's distinction, not as belonging to him by nature, but as a direct gift from God. Thou hast made him but a little lower than God: Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Man has his place in the divine creation and forms part of it: but his place is special, since he has been made only a little lower than God. As such, he shares the divine

mind, like the heavenly powers of psalm 29, who were admitted to the divine council. This makes him the world's master. For, as God made the world, not out of caprice, but to serve His supreme purpose, He also made man more than a mere part of that universe, since he is the only part which can share the ends of his Creator, and can welcome and serve the divine purpose in it all. Sharing these thoughts of God, man is the divine vice-gerent in creation.

Two matters deserve special notice in this suggestive utterance. The one is that it is not national in its reference, but human and universal. In psalm 29 it is possible to say, though a great deal can be urged to prove the opposite, that the well-being of His people which it is the glory of God to promote, means no more than the well-being of Israel. But in psalm 8 the writer is not thinking of Israelites, but of men as men. It is man's place in the universe with which he is concerned.

The other is that the universe is still conceived as anthropocentric. However feeble the life of man is seen to be, the world is controlled for his uses in such fashion that he can and does remain its master. Man, it is true, is only regarded as possessed of this power because he has received something which is peculiarly his own and which allies him with the divine. But the universe, apart from man, is not conceived as embodying in itself and for itself

something of the divine mind, even something which could not be expressed through man himself.

I do not say this as though it implied that the psalmist could not or did not hold such an opinion. Again it is necessary to remember that we are dealing with a religious lyric, not with a theological treatise. The writer naturally concentrates on one theme which for the time engrosses his whole mind. I mention it rather as the point of transition to another nature-psalm, no. 104, which contains precisely what is absent from the other.

This has been called with a certain justice a poetic commentary on the narrative of the creation. It would be rash to conclude that the writer had before him the creation-story in the form in which it appears in the first chapter of Genesis. He may merely have been acquainted with certain traditions or ideas as to how the world came into being, which were current among his people. And these may have been employed as the basis of the account in Genesis and as the material for his hymn. But it remains justifiable to contrast the way in which the two writers have dealt with their common subject and to recognize how the different purpose of each has determined his use of what he had received. For the author of the hymn was too true a poet to be controlled by his material; he has passed it all through his own mind and bent it to serve his purpose. His theme is not, as in Genesis, the work

of creation in itself: it is the character of this creation, the wisdom according to which God made all. The universe in itself is a revelation of what was in the mind of Him who made it, and of what is in His mind since He maintains it.

Thus the creation-story merely touches on how God quelled the original chaos from which an ordered world sprang. Genesis ignores the struggle and regards the resultant cosmos as due to the simple fiat of the Almighty. God spake, and it was. The psalmist, on the other hand, does not hesitate to speak of God's rebuke and of His thunder-voice quelling the original waters (vv. 7–9). What appealed to him there was the idea of the divine order prevailing over what could and did seek to resist it. Hence he does not scruple to suggest that the resistance is still there, so active that it might even now break its bounds. In verse 9 he regards it as only restrained because God continues to restrain it. Order only continues in this world, because God is there. The world manifests the wisdom which first brought it into being, since without its presence it should return to chaos.

And what a world it is which is made possible and actual through the initial deed and the constant care of the Almighty! How his world appears to him the poet describes in a series of genre-pictures, which prove what an eye for natural beauty the Hebrew possessed, before his race was cooped into

ghettoes. Because all things depend on God and do not depend in vain, the wild-ass, shyest of desert creatures, steals down to drink in some glen where the birds, which have come to drink at the same pools, twitter in the overhanging branches (vv. 11, 12). They can do it, because of the beneficent care of God. For the waters, which once made earth a chaos and which broke bounds at the flood, are now tamed. The springs of the great deep which burst up in ruin now run among the hills. The rain too, which joined the fountains of the deep to make the flood, falls on the steppes which without it were waterless (cf. Gen. 7 : 11, 12). God has made the instrument of chaos the servant of His will. And because He controls it, the steppes and the birds and the wild-ass drink their fill.

Not these only, but all the creatures are fed. The springs and the rain nourish the earth so that it brings forth provision for man and beast, and in no niggard fashion. For the earth gives more than bread, it gives wine and oil, the something more than bare sustenance which adds so much to the colour of life (vv. 14, 15). The writer is a Hebrew, and the faith never greatly inclined to asceticism ; he is a poet, and the poets instinctively love what keeps life from becoming drab. The divine order gives more than mere necessities, it spills over into beneficence.

And there are the trees, the trees of the Lord.

To recognize why these are singled out, it is necessary to remember how comparatively treeless Palestine is and especially how the presence of any tree witnesses to the presence of hidden water, that gift of God. Then too it becomes easy to recognize why the man's thought turns at once to Lebanon, the slopes of which were once covered with forests (v. 16). Among their thick and spreading branches the storks are at home, for the woods, satisfied themselves, serve in turn to shelter life (v. 17). But Lebanon is not given over to cedars and nesting storks. Above its forests are the higher, barer crags. These also are not destitute of life, since there the rock-badger and the wild goat find a home (v. 18). The world, even in its most unlikely places, is full of life, because God has made it and still maintains it.

The heavens prove the power and wisdom of the same ordering will, for sun and moon are not lawless. The rising and setting of the one, the phases of the other, are subject to the divine order (v. 19). The creation-story of Genesis also speaks of sun and moon being there for seasons. But its seasons were probably the seasons of the cult, the festivals and new moons of Israel's worship. The poet is thinking of a wider order and of a wisdom which governs the world in larger interests. To him sun and moon do not serve Israel, but man and beast. God gave the day to man and the night to the beasts. For even the beasts of prey have their appointed place in His

universe. When the young lions roar in their hunger, their cry is an unconscious prayer to Him who gives them their food and who gives them the night in which to seek it (vv. 20, 21). With the day comes man's turn: he goeth forth unto his labour until the evening (vv. 22, 23).

Finally, as by an after-thought, the psalmist includes the sea. How much it is an after-thought seems clear from the casual way in which he introduces it and from the trivial things he has to say about it. All he has to say is that the sea is great and wide, and that it too teems with life (v. 25). Especially it is the home of the sea-monsters [1] and Leviathan. His vague language about the sea contrasts vividly with the pictures he draws of the life on the land he knows. It confines itself to what he might have seen from the hills of Judaea and to yarns about sea-serpents which he might have heard from sailors who came ashore at Joppa. But he does not really know it, for he is a landsman, a Palestinian Jew, belonging probably to some district in the Southern Negeb,[2] with his feet on the land he tills, going out to his labour until the evening

[1] At v. 26 read אמות monsters instead of אניות ships. It is not natural to speak of ships as seeking their meat from God, nor to couple them with Leviathan. On the other hand, תנינים or sea-monsters are associated with Leviathan in ps. 74 : 13, 14.

[2] The hilly country near Hebron which falls away to the open desert.

and delighting in it. The springs which feed his land are not canalized, but run free among the hills. One recalls the springs which Achsah begged from her father after he had given her husband fields near Hebron (Judges 1 : 15). The steppes there are dependent on the occasional rain and so are given over to sheep-pasture. Again one recalls Nabal, the rich flock-master in Southern Judah (I Sam. c. 25). The man lives near enough to the desert for the wild asses to be seen occasionally at the watering-places on his land, as I have seen on Speyside a deer shyly venturing up to the farm-fields in the early mornings.

All the living creatures with which the world abounds have their ordered place because God has made the world and appointed their lot there. And they continually depend for life and well-being on His constant and direct care. For the psalmist does not conceive the universe as owing its existence to the fiat of the Almighty, but then left to go its own way. To him the same divine care which brought it into being is needed, if it is to be maintained. So all the multitudinous life with which the earth is stored depends directly on its Creator, and possesses only what it pleases Him to give (v. 27). When God opens His hand, they are satisfied with good : when He hides His face, they are troubled ; when He finally decrees it, they die and return to the dust from which He alone brought them and

from which He alone can preserve them (vv. 28, 29). The world became an ordered place through the divine wisdom; it continues in its seemliness because this is never withdrawn.

There is a width of outlook in the psalm which makes it unique in the psalter. The writer dwells on the wisdom by which God made all things. And this wisdom reveals itself to him in two ways, in the order which makes the universe a cosmos and everywhere restrains the original chaos, but especially in the fact that the world is so ordered as to become a home for life. Everywhere it brings forth life and maintains it. God's glory, of which each act on His part is the revelation, is the well-being of His people. But His people are no longer Israel, nor even men. They are man and the rock-badgers of Lebanon, the wild-asses of the desert and the sea-monsters, the nesting storks and the young lions which have a claim on the night for seeking their prey.

To the writer the world is not so wholly anthropocentric as it was apt to appear to men who adopted the prophetic attitude. He could see the universe as containing in itself the expression of the mind of God. And he could regard this world apart from man, or rather the world of which man is but a part, as a revelation of the divine thought.

II

THE PSALTER AND HISTORY

There are two aspects of this subject which it is wise and even necessary to distinguish as clearly as possible. First, there is the question of the divine presence in and influence on the general course of all human history. And second, there is the way in which God is regarded as having entered into relation to Israel and as having guided its course in its peculiar history. Both of these appear in the psalter and are considered there from a common point of view. Yet they are sufficiently distinct in themselves and in the attitude which is taken to them to deserve to be considered apart.

When we think of God in history, we think at once of the way in which God guides all nations. We think of how, in this strange and baffling universe, we can recognize an end to which all the children of men are being slowly but surely directed. As Christian men, we further believe that we have seen that end in Jesus Christ, in whom there has been revealed at once what God would have men be and what they are capable of becoming. But we do not look for Him to intervene further in order to make His ends for men valid. Apart from any other considerations, there has entered into the foundations of our thinking on the question the idea of human liberty, which makes a compelled conformity even

to the divine will valueless. Men are left free to learn what is their true end. They learn it, partly through committing themselves to the great Master and finding Him a sufficient guide, partly through the failure of the civilizations and homes which men have attempted to establish in the world without Him. These come to ruin because they have fallen out of line with the true end to which human life is leading, and so have not the cement which alone can hold the fabric of society together. But the ultimate goal of history is to be reached, not by any interference from without, but by the slow discipline of time and experience.

The psalter, which equally believes in divine revelation, is also saturated with the conviction that there is an end to which all human history is moving. It is the end which God has appointed for it and to which He means to bring all things. This is described throughout the psalter as what will appear in the world when God arises, sometimes when He awakes, but especially when He takes His seat as the acknowledged king of the universe. And what this end is He has made known to His people, Israel, through their religion. Their religion is the way of life, which means at once the way to life and the way in which true life becomes their possession now. The content of that religion is variously described. Sometimes it is spoken of as trust in Yahweh, sometimes as love to Him, more generally as obedience to His law, which reveals His will

toward and for His people. But always it is regarded as the divine revelation, which has been given by Yahweh to Israel that His people may know what is His mind toward them and toward the world and what is His end for both. Whatever happens, this life is secure, since it is the issue of the divine purpose. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change and though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas. Yahweh Tsebaoth[1] is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge' (46 : 1, 2, 7).

But the psalter approaches the question of God in history along a totally different line from that which is natural to the modern mind. It comes to it from the thought of the purpose of the Almighty which He has all power to make valid, and which, because it is the only reality, He must one day make real to the confusion and destruction of everything which is opposed to it. God has an issue for all things. When He takes His seat as king, He manifests this issue, revealing it as what it is, the ultimate truth, and making it enduring. But He brings it in 'per saltum'. All the psalms which speak of Yahweh's act as king speak of Him as renewing His world through a fiat of His power or through an act of

[1] I merely transcribe the two Hebrew words, instead of the more familiar 'Lord of Hosts', which appears to me to convey a false impression.

judgement which is to blot out the wicked. The wicked on whom the judgement is passed are generally described as the world outside Israel, but are also sometimes thought of as forming part of Israel. Hence the judgement may at times begin from the nation itself.

The end, accordingly, is something which God is not conceived as bringing in through the slow course of history and through the discipline of man, as men learn to share His purpose. It is rather something which He superinduces on history, in order to correct an errant world and to prevent it from returning to chaos. Israel's part is to welcome it. They can do this when it comes, as they can rejoice now in the certainty of its advent, because the people have served the divine end and have committed themselves to it. But God brings it in, not primarily through their obedience nor for their sake, but through His own act and for His own name's sake.

The conception appears in its most general form in psalm 93. I offer a new translation, not with the hope of improving on our English version, but in order to bring out certain features which deserve our attention here. It would be mere pedantry to insist on the retention of these minor matters in a translation for ordinary use : it is not pedantic to emphasize them for careful study.

Yahweh has become king,
has clothed himself with majesty,[1]

[1] Omit לבש יהוה as otiose.

has girt himself with power.
He has also set [1] the earth firm and sure.
Thy throne endures from eternity,
From everlasting art Thou (unto everlasting).[2]
Floods, O Yahweh, lifted up,
floods lifted up their roar;
let floods lift up their torrent.
Than the roar of mighty waters,
mightier than sea-breakers,[3]
yea, mightier is Yahweh on high.
What Thou makest sure is a firm stay;
holiness befits Thy house, O Yahweh, for all time.

The Septuagint adds, as a heading, an interesting rubric to the effect that the psalm was appointed for use on Friday, when the earth became peopled: and in the synagogue worship psalm 93, along with its predecessor, is still chanted on the evening before Sabbath. The Talmud [4] finds the reason for this usage in the doctrine that on the sixth day God finished His work and began to rule over His creatures. Commenting on this, Duhm [5] remarks that 'the Septuagint or the Egyptian Jews there prove themselves to understand the psalm better than all the exegetes who interpret it allegorically

[1] Reading תְּכֵן: all the versions render the verb as a transitive.

[2] Something is needed to complete the line. The bracketed words are Duhm's suggestion.

[3] Read אדיר ממשברי: the initial mem has been carried to the wrong word.

[4] *Rosh hash-shana*, 31 a.

[5] *Commentary on the Psalms*, ad loc.

or relate it to some historical event'. Commenting in turn on Duhm and heartily agreeing with his remark, one can only regret that he has not recognized its full implication for the interpretation of the little poem.

The psalm is an eschatological hymn. Yahweh, who once created and ordered the universe, is about to renew it and restore it to the order from which it has lapsed. And as at the beginning, when He made the earth a habitable world, He sat enthroned its acknowledged king, so in the consummation, when He has brought it back from its disorder, He shall be recognized for what He is, the source of its sure peace. The writer, speaking like a prophet, sees that time already come : the great event has arrived and Yahweh has assumed the sovereignty over His universe.

That is why the R.V. rendering of the opening sentence ' the Lord reigneth ' is misleading, since it inevitably suggests to the reader the uninterrupted government of God and His unvarying control. What the Hebrew wished to say, however, was that there was a period when God should reveal Himself as king in a way in which He had not yet done. It is true that He had always been king. The writer is careful to say that the divine throne endures from eternity, as though he would avoid even the appearance of suggesting that the creation added anything to the divine majesty. But as God at first asserted

His royal power by calling the world into being, so He should reassert it in the decisive act of restoring a ruined world. It is easier, however, to recognize the inadequacy of the R.V. rendering than to find a better. Perhaps 'Yahweh has proclaimed Himself king', clumsy though it is, best expresses the thought.

The phrase was current in Israel in connexion with the accession of its kings. Absalom's emissaries went out among the tribes with instructions that 'as soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, ye shall say, Absalom has become king in Hebron' (II Sam. 15 : 10). Jehu's young captains at Ramoth-Gilead set their general on some elevated place and blew a trumpet to announce 'Jehu has become king' (II Kings 9 : 13). The prophets were able to take over the saying and apply it to God, for, when Deutero-Isaiah announced the new age which was dawning for Israel and the world, he spoke of the messenger who was to proclaim to Zion 'Yahweh has become king' (Isa. 52 : 7). The psalmist is beyond Zion and is seeing more than the restoration of Israel. When Yahweh proclaims Himself king, it is as God of the whole earth. And it is a new, because restored, world over which He reigns, as it was a new, because habitable, world over which He was at first acknowledged lord. Israel and Zion are only part of that world, which needs and receives its divine ruler.

No one announces Him, as though His authority

depended on its being acknowledged. He announces Himself through this prophetic oracle. It was not the acknowledgement of creation which made Him king at first. His throne did not need to be set up ; it was always there, ready for Him to take His seat. Now the psalmist sees Him about to mount His throne again as ruler in a world which needs renewal.

In vv. 3 f. the writer makes use of the old creation-myth, according to which the original chaos, and especially Tehom the water-flood, resisted the divine will in the beginning.[1] Yahweh overcame them then, and their resistance only served to prove more clearly His sovereign power. He will again overcome these spirits of disorder, and anew prove His right to reign. The use of the tenses in v. 3 shows what was in the psalmist's mind. Once the water-floods roared against Him who controlled them—in vain. Again they may roar and seem to be free from all restraint. But, as their futile effort in the beginning only resulted in His glory, the present resistance in the world to all seemly order can only serve the same end. For that end is at hand : Yahweh has proclaimed Himself king.

In that day what alone can stand fast is that which conforms to the divine standard. And this has been revealed to Israel. What befits the divine house is holiness. It alone has eternal validity.

[1] Cf. psalm 104, p. 22.

The psalm gives the scheme of thought in its broad features. God has an end for the world, which He superinduces on history. Since it is the divine end, it is the final emergence of what was in God's mind when He made all things. The end will be the return to the beginning. It will involve the destruction of everything which has set itself against the divine will. But God Himself will bring it in. Israel's part is to welcome it when it comes. And this Israel can do, because it knows what the purpose of its God is. It knows that holiness befits His house for ever.

In psalm 97 we have another eschatological hymn which, especially when it is studied alongside psalm 93, serves to bring out more clearly the thought of the psalter on the subject.

Yahweh has become king;
let the earth exult,
let the multitude of coastlands rejoice.
Cloud and thick darkness surround Him:
the support of His throne is righteousness.[1]
Fire goes before Him
to destroy His enemies on every side.
The flashes of His lightning light up the world;
at the sight the earth trembles.
Mountains melt like wax
before the face [2] of the Lord of the universe.

[1] Omit ומשפט as overloading the line.

[2] Omit מלפני יהוה as otiose. It was unnecessary to say that Yahweh was the Lord of the universe in such a hymn.

The heavens proclaim His righteousness,
and all the nations see His glory.
The idolaters are all ashamed,
everyone who boasts of idols,
all the gods bow down to Him.
Zion hears it with joy
and the daughter-towns of Judah exult
because of Thy just acts, O Yahweh.
For Thou art supreme over all the earth,
set high above all gods.
Yahweh loves all who hate evil,[1]
keeping the lives of His saints,
delivering them from the power of bad men.
Light dawns [2] on the just,
and joy on the upright in heart.
Rejoice, ye just, in Yahweh
And sing aloud to His holy name.[3]

The accession of every ruler is hailed by the acclamations of his subjects. When Israel chose its first king, ' all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord . . . and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly ' (I Sam. 11 : 15). When Joash was appointed, ' they made him king and anointed him ; and they clapped their hands and said, God save the king ' (II Kings 11 : 12). When Yahweh proclaims Himself king,

[1] The Massoretic text gives a good sense, but one which it is difficult to correlate with the parallel clauses. Read אֹהֵב and שֹׂנְאֵי.

[2] Neither in English nor in Hebrew is it natural to speak of ' sowing ' light. Read זרח with Sept. Syr. Targ.

[3] זכר = שם cf. 30 : 5.

there is the same joy in a wider empire ; the whole earth exults aloud, even the distant coastlands of the Mediterranean have cause for rejoicing (cf. Isa. 42 : 10, 12 ; 51 : 5).

He has taken His seat on the heavenly throne. Because it is in heaven, it is withdrawn from the full knowledge of men. With awe as well as exultation, they may wait to know what is to be the issue. But, while cloud and darkness are round the presence, one thing is sure—the support on which the throne is founded. To follow the psalmist's thought, it is useful to remember that the thrones of kings and gods were represented as borne up on demons. Babylonians and Assyrians were accustomed to set their kings and picture their gods on thrones which were supported by threatening beasts or genii.[1] In these symbols men saw a figure of that on which the dominion rested, and for which the kingdom was apt to stand. While the thrones of the world rested on brute force and terror, the one support of Yahweh's throne was righteousness. And, while He Himself was hidden in cloud and darkness, the end of His government was clear and blessed. He ruled by righteousness and for righteousness. When, therefore, He proclaimed Himself king, the world had cause for joy.

Not only did the psalmist believe in this end of

[1] Cf. Gressmann's *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder*, Band II, Abb. 91, 92, 137.

the divine purpose, but he believed that it had been revealed. He proceeds in vv. 4 f. to describe a theophany, the divine self-revelation. But to what does he refer, or indeed does he refer to anything in particular? The terms in which he describes the divine appearance were traditional in Israel, and find their analogies in psalm 18, but especially in the theophanies which were granted to Moses and Elijah. As such, they have been taken to be borrowed from the phenomena of a thunderstorm; and with this explanation the flashing lightning and the storm-cloud, which is the divine chariot, agree. Duhm, accordingly, finds himself able to dismiss the psalm with the remark that it 'expresses the feelings with which a Jew regarded a thunderstorm'. But this easy verdict fails to meet the situation, since hills are not in the habit of melting like wax before a thunderstorm, either in Palestine or anywhere else. It is necessary to look a little more closely. And then it is noteworthy that earthquake accompanies the storm in the theophany at Horeb (Exod. 19 : 18; I Kings 19 : 11), that smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, that Deut. 4 : 11 describes the mountain burning with fire into the heart of heaven, accompanied by darkness and cloud. Psalm 18 : 7, 8, 13 speaks of earthquake attended by the fall of glowing stones, and Mic. 1 : 4 like our psalm represents the hills melting like wax. The background of the theophany, which has supplied all

these phenomena, is some form of volcanic eruption; and these features appear most strongly in the description of the appearance at Horeb to Moses and Elijah.

What, then, was in the psalmist's mind was the divine revelation to Israel, which made it the people of Yahweh. He does not go back, like the writer of psalm 93, to the creation, and think of God restoring a broken world, which was made at first by Him. He goes back to the time when Yahweh revealed the principles of His eternal government, and constituted a nation. It was a nation through its God being recognized as the source of all authority among men. Accordingly it is not the universe, it is the world of men and their restoration through submission to God's will which fills the mind of the psalmist. Hence the initial act which determines all the divine purpose is that revelation of His will when, out of the clouds and thick darkness, He made Himself known to His people. And this can be summed up in the saying, that the one support of the divine throne is righteousness. When He takes His seat on His throne in the consummation of all things and anew manifests the eternal realities, His ends are determined by His unchanging nature. Since His nature is righteousness, the new kingdom fulfils a righteous purpose.

Therefore Zion and the daughter-towns of Judah are first summoned to rejoice. Israel has the best reason to rejoice, for it has had the opportunity to

know the divine mind and to learn how salutary and blessed it is. It has been privileged to learn the eternal standards of the divine government, and to know the security of all who commit themselves to that wise rule. Israel can only rejoice to know that the time is near when the government of the world is recognized to be in the hands of a just God.

But the privilege of Israel is limited to this. When once the kingdom has been set up, it is for the world, and all the nations shall be renewed under it. Israel shall have no privilege there, except that it can first bring its homage to the King who has taken His seat on His throne. Zion shall be the first to exult at the news, because Zion has the best reason to know the issue and the blessedness of such a reign. But all the world shall rejoice with her.

The divine government, because of its nature, must bring to nothing everything which is opposed to it. It cannot be indifferent, because its one support is righteousness. In particular, when God proclaims Himself as king, everything which has received the name of god shall be seen to be folly. There can be but one government, when its support is righteousness and its issue is the same. Those, therefore, who set their hopes on idols shall pass away as utterly as the empty things to which they cling. But those whom the Lord loves are all who hate evil, and those who are made secure are the upright in heart. All who accept the divine

standards and submit to the divine demands have the right of entry into the kingdom.

Again we find the consummation of history. We have it brought in through the fiat of the divine majesty and through a divine self manifestation. It is again represented as the return of all things to their first beginning in the divine mind. Only the issue is more clearly seen to imply the destruction of everything which is in opposition to God's purpose. And, since the scene is mankind rather than the world in general, what shall vanish in the end is evil men.

Psalm 82 gives essentially the same representation of the consummation, though from a different point of view and to serve a different end. Here a psalmist is expressing his conviction that the religion of his nation must become the universal religion and is giving the reason for his belief. He too opens with the scene when Yahweh takes His seat, the acknowledged king of the universe: 'Yahweh has taken His seat in the divine assembly.' Again the verb is perfect; and the sense is not the 'standeth' of the R.V. with its suggestion of the continuance of God's supreme place there. He has now taken His seat on the throne which sets Him high, the recognized Lord. His first act is then described in the following imperfect tense: He proceeds to judgement. And in the consummation, when all things receive their final ordering, He summons the gods of the nations to the judgement bar that they may

say what they have made of His world.[1] And He condemns them because they have not been able

[1] It would be equally legitimate to understand by these who are summoned to the divine bar, not the gods, but the guardian angels of the nations. For our immediate purpose either translation will serve, so long as it is recognized that these, angels or gods, represent and can be held responsible for the life of the peoples over whom they are set.

It is not possible in this place to justify fully the rendering of 'gods' or 'guardian angels' as against the translation 'judges' which Kirkpatrick gives in the C.B. ad loc., and which Kittel retains in his recent commentary. But this must be said generally. Appeal may be taken to Exod. 21 : 6 as offering some ground for the view that the name אלהים or gods was applied to judges in Israel, though even there this rendering stands so much in need of support that it is incapable of giving support. But there is no justification in Hebrew usage for calling judges 'sons of the Most High' (v. 6). And if we are to accept the rendering 'judges' in this verse, we must suppose Yahweh to be represented as saying 'Ye are judges, and all of you sons of the Most High', a translation which seems to condemn itself.

Besides, it does not appear natural for a psalmist to say that the foundations of the world are reeling (v. 5), because the judicial court at Jerusalem was abusing its functions, or, for no larger cause, to call on Yahweh to arise and judge the world in order that He may inherit all the nations (v. 8). An intervention of Yahweh in His world for the benefit of all nations must be called for because of some larger need than the failure of a few local judges. The whole situation in the psalm is on too large a scale to suit with the idea that the writer has in his mind merely some local injustice, however gross its character. He is thinking in terms of the world and of God's relation to it, not in terms of Israel and of the behaviour of some officials there.

or have not even attempted to establish righteousness and mercy, the enduring cement of society and the ultimate realities in life (vv. 3, 4). Through this failure on their part the present order is everywhere reeling back into chaos (v. 5). For it has not through them won any hold on the only things which can keep it from collapse. Therefore they shall die like men, gods though they were, and give place to Israel's God who, when He rises up, shall judge the earth and inherit all nations (vv. 6–8). For righteousness and mercy have been Israel's peculiar heritage, forming what it learned and kept of the end of the Lord for men. When, therefore, Yahweh takes His seat as king in His day, the alien faiths shall vanish; and with their disappearance the world will lose nothing but a lie, which misled men because it was false in itself and mischievous in its results. Since they have brought nothing but confusion and falsehood, God sweeps them away by the forth-putting of His power.

There we have an end to human history, which is the divine purpose for it; we have that end as something which is revealed to Israel; we have it finally brought in per saltum. Why is it the last? Why does the psalter conceive it to be brought about through the divine fiat?

It has been thought possible to find in this conviction no more than the expression of the intense national pride of a people which conceived itself to

be peculiarly favoured of its God. In the days of its strength it may have hoped, with the furtherance of the Almighty, to make its cause, which it identified with the cause of God, dominant in the world. In the days of its weakness, when it was scattered and impotent, it looked for its God to maintain its cause and to give it back pride of place by destroying its enemies. But there are several reasons which make it more than difficult to accept this interpretation of the situation. It is only necessary to mention two, because they bear on our immediate object, which is to discover why the psalter takes a certain view of the divine action in history.

The first is that all these psalms, which deal with the consummation, have nothing to say about the peculiarly national characteristics of Israel's religion. In psalm 93 that which God sets fast and makes a sure stay is the holiness which befits His house. In psalm 97 the support of His throne is righteousness, and the issue of His government is to make clear His love for all who hate evil. In psalm 82 the gods of the nations are condemned because they have failed to establish in the world justice and mercy.

Now these are the characteristics, not of a national, but of a universal religion. The writer, it is true, believes that these eternal verities, which have been lacking in all the ethnic religions, have been revealed to Israel through its faith. But it is not on the ground of this faith being Israel's that he

is confident that it must control the world. The God, whose character is justice and mercy and who made known His nature and will to Israel, shall inherit all nations.

Further it is difficult to accept the explanation of this position being the outcome of the national character of Israel's faith, because the same position appears in certain forms of Christianity, which is generally regarded as a universal religion. Thus it represents the attitude of official Roman Catholicism and of the strict evangelical religion in which I was reared. These forms of Christianity relegated, it is true, the judgement-day when God took His seat and was acknowledged king into the distant future on the other side of time, while the psalter expected it here on this side of time. But otherwise the Jew and the Christian follow the same scheme of thought. God brought in the end per saltum, through a fiat of His power by which He overcame all resistance and by which He exercised judgement on everything outside. And when He sifted out His world, He threw on the scrap-heap all who were outside the covenanted relation to Him. In the Roman Catholic scheme that meant the unbaptized and all who had not come into relation to the outward official Church. In the scheme of austere evangelicalism it was the unconverted who had not through Christ entered into the covenanted mercy of God. In the thought of the Jew it included all

who were beyond the covenanted nation. With their vanishing the world lost nothing, for it only lost what had never had any hold on the end which God was bringing in and which was the one enduring reality.

Several factors combined to render it natural for the writers of the psalter to take this attitude to history. Thus it is clear how close was the relation between their thought and that of the prophets. For their conception of the consummation of all things has much in common with the prophetic day of the Lord.[1] What, however, deserves special emphasis, because it has been unduly neglected, is that the leading factor which determined the psalmists is the same which has brought about its continuance in the Christian church. Through it men expressed a religious conviction. Israel was embodying its view of the absolute truth and distinctive character of its own religion. This religion was a revelation committed to the nation by God which was entirely distinct from every other faith. As a revelation of the divine mind, it must ultimately be recognized to be the final truth to the confusion of all others. And it is this religious conviction which has given and is still giving force to the same attitude inside Christendom. Personally I cannot but record my sense of debt to the form of Christianity in which I was reared. With all its

[1] For a discussion of this larger question see my book, *Visions of the End.*

intellectual limitations it drove into the minds of those who were its adherents that Jesus Christ was unique and that a man's relation to Him makes the profoundest difference. In the same way the psalter, through its view of history and the end of history, recorded its faith that Yahwism was unique in the world and held the ultimate truth.

In this connexion, also, it is necessary to remember that the psalms, as a rule, express the convictions and take the attitude of the official religion of their time. The men who collected them and made them into the accepted psalter of their community were already members of a strongly organized community. And every organization, especially every religious organization, is bound in the nature of the case to mark itself off very sharply from the rest of the world. It draws the consequences of its distinctive principles with a logical precision which fits very ill the facts of human life. There may be many men within the Roman communion who hesitate to subscribe to the dictum 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus'; but the organized society dare not now define itself in any other way. There were men in the Jewish community who believed that Yahweh held a relation to all men. Indeed psalm 82 seems to suggest that Yahweh will claim and receive the adoration of all men. But the official psalter is always apt to bear the stamp of the organization. To it the world outside Judaism lay under the power of the

evil one, had no hold upon God, and therefore could have no abiding reality. When God arose in judgement, the result would be to make manifest all this world for the unreality it was. History would be brought to an end by an intervention from without on the part of the Almighty. The end was so clearly the purpose of God that He could reveal it and had revealed it to His chosen people. But the root of the entire attitude of mind is not arrogance, national or otherwise: it is a deep sense of the reality of revelation. Its limitation is the old limitation as to what is exactly meant by revelation.

There is, however, the other aspect of the subject —the Psalter and History—which has already been mentioned, the way, namely, in which God has come in history into relation to His own people. Israel has a history which is distinctive, because it is the people of Yahweh. Its existence as a nation took its origin from His act in delivering it from Egypt. It owes its continuance to His constant guidance. In particular it owes its law to His having made known His will at Sinai. It owes its land to the victory He made possible under Joshua. It owes its kingdom to His having raised up David.[1]

These incidents connected with the history of the

[1] Jirku has recently called attention to this conspectus of Israel's history in his book, *Die älteste Geschichte Israels*, Leipzig, 1917. He has, however, worked out his theme along a very different line from that which is followed here.

people are dwelt on sporadically throughout the psalter. But, further, a sketch of Israel's past, which includes these events with the exception of the Davidic kingdom, has been reduced to a somewhat stereotyped form which is frequently used in certain of the psalms. So familiar was it that Stephen is represented to have found it natural to use a similar form when he came to speak in his defence at Jerusalem. A conspectus of the national history evidently served a liturgical purpose in connexion with Israel's worship.

The short sketch, however, was employed for very different purposes. And it is worth while to ask whether it is possible to discover what these purposes were. Now in two companion psalms, 105 and 106, practically the same record of the early history of the nation appears. Yet the difference in the treatment of the common material is quite as marked as the resemblance in the incidents and in their order.

In psalm 105 the story of Israel's past and of God's dealing with it is dwelt on as a cause for wonder and gratitude. The greatness of God's bounty in His deeds on behalf of the nation and His goodness in condescending to its needs are the constant theme. Then comes the conclusion which marks the purpose of it all. 'He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with singing. And he gave them the lands of the nations; and they took the labour of the peoples in possession; that

they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Hallelu Yah' (vv. 43–45). God, that is to say, did not choose Israel for itself, but for His own ends with it and through it. He had a purpose in all He did for Israel. And that purpose He made known to the men in statute and ordinance. Their distinctive life rests in their serving this purpose of God. The law, therefore, which is the norm of their distinctive life, is Israel's privilege and pride before the world, as it is the end for which its God chose and saved it. The law is not a burden which God has laid upon the nation; it is a sign of His peculiar grace that He should have made known His will to the people in a shape which brought it within all men's reach.

We need only compare the psalm with certain sections of the introductory chapters of Deuteronomy, notably with 4 : 1–24 and 6 : 20–5, in order to recognize the end which this sketch of Israel's early history was meant to serve. It was a liturgical hymn used on some occasion when a summary of the law, or some portion of the law, was read in the hearing of the people. They are the people of Yahweh who observed His law, and the law constitutes their peculiar contribution to the world. In its briefest form the scheme appears as the heading of the decalogue: 'I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before Me' (Exod. 20 : 2, 3). Yahweh has made Israel a

nation. The life which it owes to Him must be devoted to Him alone.

In psalm 106 there appears essentially the same sketch of Israel's early history, though certain incidents in the desert-wanderings are dwelt on for a reason which will appear later. But the entire tone is changed. Instead of the record of the divine bounty being used to quicken wondering gratitude, insistence is laid on the way in which the nation received these evidences of its God's favour. Uniformly it has proved itself ungrateful. Even at the passage of the Red Sea, the event which brought the nation into being, it showed itself rebellious (v. 7). Again, when Yahweh brought Israel into covenant with Himself and constituted it His peculiar people, it responded by making a calf at Horeb and worshipping a graven image (v. 19). When he brought it to the verge of Palestine, it despised the pleasant land which He intended to make its home (v. 24). Each signal proof of the divine favour to the people, each act by which God made Israel His own, has been accompanied by its peevish ingratitude.

Corresponding with the note which runs through all the psalm is its conclusion which points the moral and the purpose of the whole: 'nevertheless he regarded their distress, when he heard their cry; and he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise' (vv. 44 ff.).

Again, it is not difficult to determine the purpose for which the psalm was written. The theme of the nation's history with the record of God's dealing with it in the past is being employed in order to quicken repentance. The hymn is a liturgical hymn for one of the public fast-days which became so large a feature in the later worship of Israel.

We have another pair of companion-psalms in 135, 136, both of which contain the story of Israel's redemption from Egypt, its guidance through the desert rather than the revelation of the law at Sinai, and its victorious entrance into Palestine. In contrast with the psalms 105, 106, the subject is not developed at such length. But it is more significant to notice that here the story of Yahweh's relation to His people is prefaced by an ascription of praise to Him as creator, not only of Israel, but of the world. Thus psalm 135 follows its statement of Yahweh having chosen Jacob unto Himself with the wider theme: 'I know that . . . our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that hath He done, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the

rain ; he bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures ' (vv. 5–7). In psalm 136 we find : ' to him that by understanding made the heavens ; to him that spread forth the earth above the waters ; to him that made great lights ' (vv. 5–7). And again, in contrast with psalms 105, 106, these two close with no reminder to keep the law or summons to repentance. Instead they close with a renewed burst of thanksgiving which returns to the opening theme.

But psalm 136, while it thus returns to the thought of the supremacy of God in its saying, ' O give thanks unto the God of heaven,' adds the significant reason for praise, ' he giveth food to all flesh ' (v. 25). That is to say, the special relation of Yahweh to Israel is set in the larger frame of God's relation to the world. He is worshipped as more than the God of Israel, for He created the world and He still giveth food to all His creatures. Now it deserves notice that, according to Hebrew tradition,[1] this was a liturgical hymn which was sung in connexion with the festival of unleavened bread. That seems to supply a reason for both motives which are found in the hymn. For the festival of unleavened bread fell in spring at the opening of the farmer's year. So far, then, as Israel is part of the world, it is the recipient of the bounty which

[1] ' According to Soph. 18 : 12 it was sung on the seventh day of Mazzoth ' Briggs, *I. C. C. Comm.*, ad loc.

God gives to all flesh. But Israel is not merely part of the world and has received more than the rest of mankind. It is the recipient of a distinctive life which none but the faithful shares. As such, its spring festival has special content. It includes, not only what God does for all flesh, but what He has specially done for His people.

The first distinctive thing about psalm 135 is that it begins and ends with a summons to different classes in the community, which are described in the closing verses as ' the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, the house of Levi, and ye that fear the Lord ' (vv. 19, 20). Its final word, too, is a benediction to Yahweh out of Zion, who dwelleth at Jerusalem (v. 21), although it opens with praise to God as creator. Further, the writer introduces, immediately after the brief *résumé* of Israel's history, a rejection of all the gods of the nations, which are called dumb idols and whose worshippers are said to be like them (vv. 15–18). There must be a reason for these significant features and there may even be a connexion between them. Now those who fear the Lord cannot well be intended to include all Israel, for the nation has been summoned already and described as the house of Israel. More probably they form a special class, since they follow the two special classes of the priests and Levites. These may be the proselytes who are called in the New Testament *φοβόυμενοι* or *σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν*.

When such men take part, perhaps for the first time, in a distinctively Israelite festival, there is a reason for introducing the rejection of all the heathen gods. There is reason too for the emphasis on Yahweh out of Zion who dwelleth at Jerusalem. The men have renounced their past and cast in their lot with Israel, the people of Yahweh. It is natural that the psalm should open with an act of praise to Yahweh as God of the whole earth, but should close with blessing Him who is Israel's protector. I venture to regard the psalm as the liturgical hymn for some festival such as Passover, with special reference to men who then became proselytes to the Hebrew faith. It passed out of use, and its peculiar usage was forgotten, because, with the rise of Christianity, Judaism ceased to make many proselytes.

In these four cases, or, if the suggested interpretation of psalm 135 be reckoned unjustifiable, in these three cases we find the story of God's dealing with Israel in its early history cast into stereotyped liturgical forms and employed in several different ways. Sometimes the aim is to induce the temper of repentance on a fast-day, again to remind the people that its distinctive life consists in obedience to the revealed will of its God, and finally to make clear that Israel's festivals have their own specific content and imply more than mere nature-worship. But always it is not the national history in itself which is insisted on. It is that history as

containing a revelation of the divine mind toward Israel. What the liturgies emphasize is: this is the God we of Israel worship, One who has made known His mind toward us in the great historic facts which make the basis of our national existence. We live by an historic revelation.

It is the historical, not primarily the national, character of the religion on which these and similar psalms dwell. What makes this clear is to note that there are present in the psalter a number of psalms of a definitely national type, which were employed in connexion with events in their life as a people, such as the accession of a king, a royal marriage, or the opening of a campaign. Modern students differ about the number of these, but agree in recognizing their presence. And it is significant to observe that these, while they naturally dwell on the glory of Israel, make no use of anything corresponding to this sketch of its early history. The fact in itself is enough to suggest that the liturgical formula was framed and employed to serve a purpose other than the mere glorification of the nation. The inference is confirmed when it is remembered that psalm 106 employs it in order to remind men of their ill-desert and to deepen their repentance for the way in which they responded to the guardian care of their God. The memory of their past is recalled 'ad majorem Dei gloriam', non populi. It is also significant to mark the limitations to this

sketch of history. Its great and constant themes are how God freed them from the Egyptian bondage, how He entered into covenant with them at Horeb or guided them through the desert, and how He made sure their possession of Palestine. God made them a nation, and everything which constitutes their peculiar life came from Him and can only be continued through loyalty to Him. So clearly was this the purpose of the liturgy that it could be used, as 106:47 shows it to have been used, when the national independence was gone and Israel was in captivity. Israel is what it is, with its place in the world and its distinctive attitude to the world, even after it has lost its independence and its country, because of the divine intervention in an historic revelation.

The full import of this attitude of the psalter can only, I think, be measured when it is set alongside another feature which characterizes it throughout. It does not dwell on the peculiarly ceremonial side of Israel's worship. Thus one hymn describes what is necessary for access to the temple: Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? Not he who has abstained from eating unclean meats, or has kept himself free from forbidden contacts, and so has remained ceremonially clean: but he that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart (Ps. 15). And we have already seen that the writers of psalms 93, 97, and 82 are able to make the

content of their faith righteousness and mercy. As has long been recognized, the psalter is remarkably acultic. The side of religion on which it dwells is not the ceremonial, but the moral and spiritual elements. That is to say, it is not the national, but the universal aspect of their religion which is emphasized. The ceremonial side of their religion was what constituted the national worship : it had grown up with the people through its national past and taken the colour of its life and thought. The moral and spiritual side, on the other hand, was the universal element in the faith. And it is this element on which the psalter dwells insistently and constantly. Yet over against this insistence the psalter is equally careful to recognize that Israel possessed an historic revelation, which came to this nation alone at one period of time and in one place in the world. The liturgical formula, on which we have been dwelling, expresses that conviction and presents the historic revelation as that which sums up Israel's distinctive contribution to the world, its glory and its responsibility.

There are a few questions in religion and theology which present themselves continually in varying forms under the changing conditions of men's changing thought. And for these the great faiths must find, if not a permanent, at least a working solution. One of these is how men are to maintain a universal religion and yet continue to believe in

an historic revelation, which implies that God made Himself known to a chosen race in time. The more Judaism came to recognize the universal character of its faith, the more it needed to face the same question which Christian theologians have to face when they teach that theirs is a universal religion and yet recognize that it took its origin in the birth for ever blessed at Bethlehem, the passion at Calvary, and the resurrection on Olivet. The psalter shows the earlier faith not perhaps seeking to reconcile the two, but certainly holding to both positions.

The question came early before the religious minds in Israel. Amos, a spiritual genius who raised more questions than he was able to answer, appeared as a severe critic of the national religion of his time. So unsparing was his judgement on the cult at Bethel that some have found in him a criticism which amounts to the repudiation of all cult at any time. What he insisted on as the substance of true religion was that Yahweh is righteous, indeed that Yahweh is righteousness. In other words the prophet thrust into the foreground the universal element in his own and in his nation's faith. For, since righteousness knows no frontiers but belongs to man as man, Yahweh, whose will is righteousness, must also be universal and His religion must have universality as its leading characteristic. Renan recognized this in his own way, when he wrote about Israel 'ce peuple rêve toujours quelque

chose d'international.'[1] But to call it a dream is to fail to do justice to the greatness of Amos. He made it fundamental in his thought of God. Yet, if this had been all the prophet had to deliver, one must recognize that he would have been teaching little more than an ethical theory and aiming at a philosophy rather than a religion. And it would be difficult to understand why he claimed to have received his inspiration from Yahweh, the historic God of his people. For in making this claim he declared himself authorized to deliver his message in the name of One who was the God of Israel. Accordingly his teaching on the character and will of Yahweh, in spite of the universality of its tone, is balanced and fulfilled by his equally profound conviction that Israel has a special relation to God, because it has been the recipient of a peculiar revelation which has come in time. Israel's is an historic religion. For he is able to say to his people in the name of Yahweh: you only have I chosen out of all the families of the earth (3 : 2). And while he declares that Yahweh brought the Syrians from Kir even as He brought the Israelites from Egypt (9, 7), he adds that Yahweh sent prophets only to His own nation (2 : 11), and so revealed His will to them as He had not done to their neighbours.

What chiefly interests and controls the writers of

[1] L'Antéchrist, p. 228.

the psalms in their attitude to the history of their nation, as in their view of history in general, is a religious conviction. The story of the past is not dwelt on in itself, nor valued for its own sake; still less is it chanted in liturgical hymns in order to glorify the nation and stimulate its self-confidence. The purpose in dwelling upon it is to emphasize what God has shown of Himself and His will in the great acts by which He made known His grace. What He was then, He will always be; and Israel may confidently expect Him to remain the same as He then revealed Himself for its salvation. The norm of its religion is not in the fluctuating hopes and mutable experiences of men: it remains in the deeds at the Exodus which created a nation, in the revelation at Sinai which gave it a law, in the victory at Palestine which gave it a land. In the same way the norm of the Christian religion is found in the historic facts by which God revealed Himself for us men and our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Yet Judaism and Christianity claim to be universal religions.

III

THE PSALTER AND WORSHIP

In connexion with this particular subject I have taken it for granted that you neither wish nor expect me to speak about the use of the psalter for our modern worship. For you are all English, while I am a Scotsman ; most of you belong to the Church of England, while I am a Presbyterian. Had you desired a discussion of this theme, you would naturally have turned to one more familiar with your habits of thought and forms of worship. You will wish me rather to discuss the relation of the psalter to the worship of old Israel.

It needs, then, to be emphasized at the beginning that the psalter was far more closely related to the cult-practice and its recurrent ritual than has been generally recognized in the ordinary English commentaries. Instead of this one finds, on turning to Kirkpatrick's useful volume in the Cambridge Bible and to Briggs's monumental tomes in the International Critical Commentary, the frequent effort to relate certain hymns to incidents in connexion with Israel's history. From a triumphant psalm which related that Yahweh had risen up or was about to rise up for the deliverance of the people, it was concluded that some historical deliverance was the occasion which had given rise to the hymn. From some other, which was full of lamentation and

prayer for help, it was inferred that this had been written in a period of national danger. The effort was then made to determine from allusions in the psalm itself what victory or disaster had produced it. A favourite occasion for several of the psalms which celebrated deliverance was found in the supposed defeat of Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah. Or another school of interpreters found allusions in the psalter to the victories and defeats of the Maccabaean period. Perhaps what helped to lead students in this direction was the fact that Hebrew interpreters had already taken it. Several psalms are prefaced with headings which refer them to events in the life of David. It may have seemed natural, in a time when greater value was attached to these headings than is now generally the case, to connect other hymns with outstanding events in the nation's life.

That method of interpretation or approach to the psalter is apt to appear unnatural to any one who has been or is a working parson. For what a man who is in direct contact with the religious life of a community cannot fail to notice is that the theme which men celebrate in the hours of their religious gladness or appeal to in the day of distress is not the occasional acts of God in providence, however remarkable these may have been. They recall then something which declares what God has made known of Himself, about which they are sure that thus He will always be to them. As we saw in the

preceding lecture, Israel found this permanent revelation in the great deeds by which God had made them a nation and made known His will to them. And these enduring truths about Him and His will they celebrated and recalled in the acts of their cult.

You may permit me to add that the sense of the older explanation of the origin of the psalms being unsatisfactory was confirmed through an experience in the recent war. Being counted unfit for the front, I acted as a dug-out and took the place in his parish of a younger man who was sent abroad. The result was that on Armistice Day I found myself in charge of a congregation. As you are probably aware, in our communion the acting parson has large liberty to mould the service to suit the circumstances of the time or of the people, and is expected to exercise it. There were thanksgivings and petitions which both officiant and worshippers desired to utter together before Almighty God on that day; and, since we have no bishops to write our prayers, these were prepared well or ill. But, when the services of the great day were over, I burned them all. Please God, they would never be needed again. They were true for that day; but, as the day could not be repeated, neither could the words which were then spoken. Because of their origin they were entirely unfitted for constant use.

That seems true about the praises and prayers of

old Israel. What passed into permanent use were the hymns of thanksgiving and petition which suited the constantly recurring needs and expressed the recurring factors of the people's life. And the psalter was meant for permanent use.

Naturally there were many recurring events in the life of the nation, so many that it is impossible to deal here with them all. Thus there were some which concerned it as a state and which belonged to the time when it was still an independent nation possessed of its own kingdom and territory. Such events were a royal accession or marriage, the start of an army on a campaign or its return ; and, as has already been stated, a few of the hymns which were used on these occasions have survived. It is better, however, to leave these aside, since they are survivals from a distant past, and to concentrate attention on the psalms connected with those features of Israel's life which were permanent.

The main recurring events which continued after the kingdom had disappeared were the three great festivals. At these every male Israelite was required to be present and to take part. The ritual connected with these consisted largely in the offering of certain prescribed sacrifices and the due performance of a number of rites. But associated with these were also certain liturgies which were as carefully prescribed as the ritual. Our psalter contains a number of these liturgies.

But, besides the forms for the nation's worship, there were the recurrent events in the individual's life which concerned him personally. He was required to perform certain personal duties, which brought him to the sanctuary, such as the payment of his tithes. In periods of sickness he offered sacrifice, since sickness was regarded in old Israel as the evidence of God's anger resting upon a man because of his sin. Again the sacrifice was accompanied by a liturgical hymn, of which we have many examples in the psalter. But in particular it was a common practice for a man in time of need or at a season of great joy to vow a vow to the Lord. The classic instance is the case of Jacob, when he was fleeing from home and in danger of death. Such a vow involved a sacrifice or at least a gift at the altar, and so implied a visit to the sanctuary. As we learn from the practice of Elkanah when he went up to Shiloh, these vows were generally paid in connexion with the annual festival of tabernacles. 'The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow' (I Sam. 1 : 21). The practice of thus associating vow and festival was a very natural one. The man was at the sanctuary in any case for the festival, and he might well take the opportunity to combine the payment of his private vow with the fulfilment of his other duty. Besides, as the festival of tabernacles was the final harvest

thanksgiving for the year, marking at once the end of the ecclesiastical year and the period when a farmer was free from the work and anxiety of his farm, he used the occasion of his regular visit to pay his debts to Yahweh—any vow or vows which he had made during the preceding year. Again we have a number of psalms which were the liturgical hymns to accompany these votive offerings.

There is an advantage in recognizing that there were these recurrent occasions in the life of the nation and of the individual, and in recognizing that the occasions might coincide. The recognition frees us from the need of determining at the beginning that all the psalms must be either individual or congregational in their character. Some of you are no doubt aware that this question was at one time a great subject of debate among Old Testament students, and that echoes of the discussion are still to be heard. There were those who interpreted the 'I' of the psalms to imply in every case the individual Israelite who was bringing his own personal petition or expressing his own personal feeling. But others insisted as vehemently that the psalter contained no individual psalms, since the 'I' always meant the worshipping community which was personified as an individual.

If, however, we can think of many of the psalms as liturgies connected with ritual acts of the cult and can recognize that these ritual acts were not always performed by the community nor always

performed by an individual, we shall not need to form any *a priori* theory as to the meaning of the 'I' in the psalter, but may remain free to determine from the character of the psalm itself what was its special reference in each particular case. There are liturgies for public, congregational acts of worship. In these it is natural to find the presence of a worshipping community recognized and a plural form of the pronoun used. But even there it is not necessary to fall back on the idea of personification in order to explain why verses which employ 'I' occur in these psalms alongside others which speak of 'we'. For some leader of praise, a priest or even a prophet, may there be speaking as the official representative of the community. Again, we need not be troubled by discovering, in a psalm which speaks of an individual offering his vow, verses which pass into the plural forms and plainly show the presence of a larger body of worshippers. The vow was paid at a sanctuary and, as has been pointed out, was frequently paid at one of the greater festivals. The congregation might be there when the man paid his vow. Among them might be his friends who had come to rejoice with him in his recovery from a dangerous sickness or in his escape from captivity. The man accordingly paid his vow in the presence of all the people, and it is natural that both the individual and the community should at times find some place in the psalm which accompanied the rite.

On these occasions, then, whether they were the

festivals celebrated by the community or vows offered by the individual, certain ritual acts, such as sacrifices, were carried out. These were carefully prescribed in their amount and the method in which they were offered. The early chapters of the book of Leviticus largely form a hand-book for the guidance of the priests as to the animals required in different cases and as to the correct procedure in carrying out the ritual. Rules are given for the selection of the victim, for the way in which its blood must be dealt with, for the treatment of the sacrificial fat, for the disposal of the rest of the flesh and even of the offal. Nothing was left to chance, or to the will of offerer or officiant, since it was of high significance that the ritual acts should be performed after the true Israelite forms.

But from a very early period in the people's history this ritual for which the priests were responsible was accompanied by a rubric or liturgy which was repeated by the worshipper. In this he declared to whom the sacrifice was offered and for what purpose it was destined, whether as the payment of his vow or as the atonement for his sin. In it and through it appeared what the man or the community desired to do and expected to receive through the offering and its accompanying ritual. This liturgy accompanied the 'opus operatum' of the offering and was regarded as being of equal importance with the rite with which it was connected. Hence the correct

form of words was as significant to old Israel as the correct form of ritual. To utter the wrong form of words was as dangerous or futile as to sacrifice in a wrong way. The liturgy was therefore supplied along with the ritual form.

Two valuable and instructive illustrations of the early practice in this respect are to be found in the book of Deuteronomy.[1] In 26 : 1–7 the peasant-farmers of Israel are ordered to bring the first-fruits of their crop to a sanctuary of Yahweh, and there, handing it over in a basket to the officiating priest, are required to repeat at the dictation of the priest the following liturgical formula : 'a wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number ; and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous : and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage : and we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression : and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders : and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And

[1] I have given reasons for regarding these sections as belonging to an early date in my book, *The Code of Deuteronomy*, pp. 25 ff., 144 ff.

now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O Lord, hast given me' (vv. 5–10).

Dr. Cook[1] has questioned whether it is correct to regard the words employed here, ועניתּ ואמרתּ 'thou shalt answer and say' before Yahweh thy God, as implying the use of a liturgical formula which was repeated after the priest. In so doing he has surely overlooked a common usage in Hebrew syntax, which joins two verbs by the conjunction 'and', where we should subordinate the earlier verb to the later, or even substitute an adverb for the first verb. As the Hebrew 'I will hasten and go' corresponds to our 'I will go in haste', so 'thou shall answer and say' is best translated in English by 'thou shalt say in answer or responsively'. And how Hebrew tradition understood the passage is clear from one of the Talmudic tractates which deals with the bringing of the first-fruits. 'While the basket was still on his shoulder, he recited from "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God" till he finished the entire portion. . . . He then placed his basket at the side of the altar, prostrated himself and went out. Formerly any one who was able to read would read by himself, while he who could not read would repeat after the reader. But, as many people refrained from bringing the first-fruits on account of this, it was instituted

[1] In *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1925, p. 163.

that both those that are able to read and those that are not able should repeat after the reader.'[1] Clearly Hebrew tradition has retained the memory that the rite involved a liturgical formula, repeated by the worshipper, but prescribed by the priest or read from a prayer book.

The intention of the whole law is very plain. The first-fruits must be offered only at a Yahweh-shrine and only after the true Israelite tradition. It deserves notice that nothing is said about the amount of the offering or about its destination by the priest after he has received it. The weight is laid on the formal rubric which accompanied the offering, and this was not left free to the worshipper but was carefully dictated for his repetition. Thus and not otherwise, with this intention and no other, above all with entire devotion to Yahweh alone, must the true Israelite offer his first-fruits. The correct liturgy is as important as the correct sacrificial ritual.

To appreciate the situation fully we must think ourselves back into a world which was illiterate, which therefore had no prayer-books and could not have used them if it had possessed them. The illiterate countryman is having prescribed to him the meaning of the offering he is required to make. But, further, we have to think ourselves back into

[1] Bikkurim 3 : 2–8. The translation given is that of Halper in *Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature*, ii, p. 25. I selected a translation by a Jew, because it is more likely to be impartial.

the life of a nation which was living among heathen neighbours, who also presented their first-fruits to their gods. It is easy to recognize why it should be necessary to insist on certain forms being used by converts in the mission-churches to-day. It is of the first importance that they should not use any formula that they may count fitting, since they might easily import into a Christian rite language and ideas which belong to the faith which they have forsaken. And that may well commend itself to a missionary, although the rites of the new converts are entirely different from those which were formerly practised by them and are still practised by their heathen neighbours. The need for care was much greater in the case of men who were living among others who brought sacrifices and first-fruits to Baal. The difference between the rituals of the two communities lay not in the things the men did, but in the nature and character of Him in whose honour they did these things and in the purpose they had in bringing them. That is to say, the difference to the worshipper lay chiefly in the rubrics or liturgies which accompanied his offering. Hence the right form of words was of peculiar significance, and could not, therefore, be left to the will of the offerer, but was prescribed to him by the priest.[1]

[1] It deserves passing notice that the formula in Deut. 26 : 5–10 already contains the brief outline of Yahweh's dealing with Israel, which is developed in the longer liturgical hymns 105, 106, cf.

The same characteristics are present in the little ritual of Deut. 21 : 7. There a sacrifice is ordered in the case of a dead body which was found in the open field. If no man knew the slayer, the elders of the village which lay nearest to the corpse were required to bring a heifer in order to make atonement for the blood. But they are not left at liberty to carry out the sacrifice, for a priest must be present. And again his share in the function is not stated to have been that of slaying and offering the animal in the correct ritual fashion. The only duty which is laid on him is that of giving the correct form of the words which are to be spoken by the elders over the heifer. And this liturgy consists in a declaration of innocence on the part of the elders and in a prayer that Yahweh forgive His people Israel whom He has redeemed. The same elements appear, the sacrifice and the accompanying rubric which explains its intention and its desired efficacy. And again the words to be used are carefully prescribed.

There the essential elements of Israel's worship appear in the plainest form at some country shrine or on a lonely hill-side. None need be present, except the celebrant and the offerer. Everything is

pp. 50 ff. The first-fruits are brought to Yahweh, who saved Israel from Egypt and gave it Palestine. Naturally, since it is the first-fruits of the land which are the occasion of the form, Yahweh's act in the gift of Palestine is emphasized : His act in the gift of the law is not mentioned. It has no natural connexion with the first-fruits, while the gift of Palestine has.

starkly bare and severely simple. But it is the germ out of which all the rest can easily and naturally arise. Make the country-shrine the larger temple, equip it with a full priesthood, add, as Isaiah [1] shows we have the right to do, the use of music, employ priestly choirs for this music, make the occasion include no longer a farmer bringing his first-fruits or a little village-commune, but Israel at one of the great festivals : and you make possible and easy the development into an elaborate and ornate service. But the fundamental elements continue, which were present at the beginning. The offering is incomplete without the accompanying words which serve to explain its meaning, to whom it is brought, why it has been brought, and what can be expected through it. The outward rite in itself may bear half-a-dozen meanings. And Israel, conscious of the fact, was careful to equip sacrifice and offering with the living word. It was also careful to make this an official and prescribed word which might serve to guarantee that the offering was brought with the right intention.

The psalter is largely a collection of these cult-hymns which were intended for the use of individuals or of the community, but which were originally associated with an act of the cult, one of the greater festivals, a procession to the temple, a sacrifice for sin, the payment of a vow.

[1] 30 : 29.

Such a phenomenon was not confined to Israel, for there is evidence that a similar practice prevailed in the neighbouring nations. Of recent years there have been discovered in Babylonia and in Egypt and have been translated a number of ritual hymns, which were intended for use in connexion with public and private forms of worship.[1] Like the psalter, these appear to have been prevailingly metrical in form and so to have been intended to be accompanied by music. They even show the parallelism which is a well-known feature in the Hebrew hymns. But they were found in the temples, and accordingly must have been in the hands of the priests. It was natural that those which were intended for use in connexion with the sacred processions and public ceremonies should be preserved there, to be produced and employed when the solemn days came round. But the liturgies for the use of private individuals were also retained by the priesthood and were evidently handed out to be recited by worshippers. For some of these are fitted with blank headings: I, M. N. or, as we should say, I, so and so, profess or confess—then follows the hymn. The man, who had occasion to use the psalm, filled in his own name in each case.

[1] See Jastrow, *Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, i, 1905; Zimmern, *Babylonische Hymnen und Gebete*, vol. i, 1905, vol. ii. 1911; Erman, *Aegyptische Religion*, 1909; and Röders, *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Aegyptens*, 1915.

The usage proves that, not only the ritual practice, but the accompanying liturgical form, was prescribed in all ancient worship. And its prevalence in Babylonia and Egypt incidentally suggests how early the custom must have prevailed in Israel and that some of the Hebrew psalms may be very old.[1]

When the psalter is studied from this point of view, it becomes easier to understand certain features which appear in it. It is impossible in the time at our disposal to do more than give one or two illustrations, and it seems wiser to choose these from the simplest and better-known hymns. The simpler cases will show the general character of the cult-hymns and serve to give some key to those which are more complicated. Further, it may be valuable to select a hymn connected with a vow and one connected with a great festival. The two will at least illustrate how both the individual and the community were served by the psalter.

[1] I have said that the psalter is largely a collection of cult-hymns. There are also found in it psalms, such as 16, 49, 90, which can be more naturally described as meditations than as hymns, and which, with our knowledge of the ritual that prevailed in old Israel, it seems difficult to bring into any connexion with the cult. Yet Zimmern (I. 27 ff.) has translated a remarkable Babylonian hymn which is in some respects analogous to these psalms. What the fact suggests is that in our ignorance of the cult of early Israel we unduly limit the nature of its worship. There may have been elements in it of which, beyond these psalms, we have no knowledge.

Psalm 116, then, is the liturgy employed by a man who had come to the sanctuary in order to pay his vow. It opens with an ascription of praise to Yahweh and then passes directly into the special reason the man has for gratitude to his God. He has been ill, so ill as to be near to death. 'The cords of death compassed me, and the pains of Sheol had firm hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow' (v. 3). There is no cause for regarding this to mean other than what it plainly states. 'Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver me'[1] (v. 4). This prayer, he believed, was both heard and answered. 'Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. I was brought low, and He saved me' (vv. 5, 6). What, then, is to follow? This: 'what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord' (vv. 12–14). The vow he pays is the vow he made in the day of his distress, the vow he promised to pay on recovery, if it should please God to heal him. But such a vow implied an offering, the sacrifice of thanksgiving or תודה, to employ the technical phraseo-

[1] 'Deliver me' rather than 'deliver my soul'. Soul inevitably suggests the idea of spiritual distress. Now the man means all his distress, bodily, mental, and spiritual, as v. 8, with its description of what Yahweh has done for him, shows.

logy of the ritual. The man uses the phrase here: 'I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of Yahweh.' For it was to Yahweh the vow had been made as it was He to whom the recovery was due. The worshipper carefully invokes the great name, for his sacrifice must have the right intention. Again, since the payment of the vow implied a sacrifice, it must be paid at a sanctuary. And, since it could only be duly carried out at a sanctuary, it was often carried out, as has been seen, at some festival period. Whatever occasion brought the man to the sanctuary and offered him the convenient opportunity to fulfil his vow, there were others present besides himself. Especially his own friends were there, who knew how near to death he had been brought and who rejoiced with him in his recovery. It is natural to find their presence recognized: 'I will pay my vows unto the Lord, yea, in the presence of all his people.'

The psalm is the liturgy which was used before the sacrifice; and the recitation of it was closed by the man bringing his kid or lamb or whatever he had vowed to the attendant priest in order that it might be presented at the altar. It is a very simple form, yet it is obvious at once that the hymn need not have been written by the offerer himself. In view of the careful way in which Deuteronomy prescribes the rubric which the worshipper was to use and expects the priest to repeat

it before-hand, it is not likely that such procedure would have been tolerated. Besides, the psalm is metrical in form, and it is not to be supposed that the majority of worshippers were more capable of writing religious poetry than most worshippers in our modern congregations. The hymn was supplied to the man at the shrine, as the Babylonian and Egyptian hymns were delivered over by the priests.

While, however, psalm 116 need not have been composed by the man who used it, it could be recited by him personally. It involves, as in the case of Deut. 26 : 1–7, no larger personnel than the worshipper and the officiating priest. There are cases, on the other hand, which point to a more developed ritual, and in these the liturgical part was recited by a choir of priests or a leading priest. This method would naturally be resorted to, where there were several men who had been involved in the same distress and who desired to acknowledge a common deliverance. When they united to present their thanksgiving, it was natural that a priest should chant the psalm which was common to them all. That appears to be the situation in psalm 107. Here, it must be acknowledged, there is not so clear an indication as in psalm 116 that the men are engaged in the payment of a vow which they had made in their day of distress. But the summons to offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving in v. 22 makes it probable that the absence of a clearer

indication of the men's purpose is merely due to its having been taken for granted.

The situation is that of one of the greater festivals at Jerusalem, passover or tabernacles. The long procession of worshippers is marshalled to climb from the lower city to the temple. Many of the men are pilgrims who have come from all quarters to take part in the celebration, for, when they start, a choir intones a short canticle of praise to Yahweh who in His mercy has brought them together from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south (vv. 1–3). But after this the psalm falls into four strophes (4–9, 10–16, 17–22, 23–32). These do not deal with the whole body of worshippers, but describe the condition of four different classes of men. Each of the strophes opens with a description of the plight to which the men were reduced, continues with thanksgiving to God who has delivered them, and closes with the summons that men would ' praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men '. The four classes are men who have lost their way on a caravan journey through the desert (which must have been no uncommon experience for pilgrims to the holy city), others who have been in prison or captivity, some who have been dangerously sick, and sailors escaped from shipwreck. It is obvious that each body of worshippers could only give thanks for their own deliverance, and hence

it is natural to suppose that those who were in like case marched together. They may well have been led or accompanied by a priest who chanted the canticle which described their escape.

Again, however, it is not to be supposed that every festival season brought to the temple all these four classes of men who had cause for thanksgiving over their escape from precisely these calamities. There must have been many a feast at Jerusalem at which no sailors rescued from shipwreck were present at all. What then the psalm offers is a collection of the liturgies which could be used in any of the cases enumerated. They were preserved at the temple to be employed when the need of them emerged, but they need not all have been employed at the same time.

But, further, as it has been possible to discover two psalms which treat of the individual or of a class of worshippers, and to see their connexion with the cult, it is also possible to select a community psalm and to point out its association with one of the public festivals. And the recognition of the purpose for which it was written makes its terms much more clear. Thus in the Jewish service psalms 113–18 form the hallel or liturgy which was sung at all the three great feasts. And in particular, psalms 113, 114 were sung at passover immediately before the meal, psalms 115–18 at its conclusion.[1] I select psalm 114, partly because it is briefer than the

[1] Cf. Pesachim, 117 f.

others, partly because, unlike some of these liturgical compositions, it has elements of true poetry. And I venture to offer a new translation.

When Israel went out from Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a stammering people,
Judah became his peculiar property,[1]
Israel his realm.
The sea saw and fled,
Jordan turned backward:
the mountains leaped like rams,
hills like lambs.
What ails thee, O sea, that thou dost flee,
O Jordan, that thou dost turn backward:
Ye mountains, that ye leap like rams,
hills like lambs?
Before Yahweh tremble, O earth,
before the God of Jacob
who turns a rock into a pool,
a flint into a spring.

The references to the Exodus are unmistakable and serve to show that the psalm was originally

[1] Not his 'sanctuary' which is the rendering in R.V. קדש is used here in the original sense of the word, to mark something set apart from common use and reserved for the divine use. The idea is well brought out in Jeremiah who speaks 2: 3 of Israel at the time of the deliverance from Egypt and calls it holiness, i.e. קדש, unto the Lord, the first-fruits of his increase, and who draws the inference that every one who devoured the people should be held guilty. The nation was set apart to God, as the first-fruits were withdrawn from ordinary human use. Any one who treated these first-fruits as though they were still his own property to be employed for his own needs was held guilty of sacrilege.

written for use at Passover, since Passover was early associated in the cult with this great event. But the writer has made a singularly personal use of his material. To recognize this, it is only necessary to compare his references to the early history of his people with other psalms like 105, 106, which deal with the same events. There the incidents are marshalled formally and the whole is reduced to a somewhat stereotyped tradition. A student sits down to examine them with the accounts of the books of Exodus and Numbers at hand, and compares the narratives to see on which traditions the liturgist has been dependent. Here a poet is saying what Passover meant to him, and he selects and marshals his incidents to illustrate his thought, with the same freedom with which the writer of psalm 104 used his material about the creation to bring out his own teaching.

The psalmist saw the Red Sea with the narrow track running from one shore to the other. On one side was bondage, on the other liberty: and in the transit a nation was born. It came out of Egypt from a stammering nation. All primitive peoples count the language they do not speak themselves to be an inarticulate babble like the chatter of apes. The poet uses that. On the shore of liberty Israel spoke its own tongue, the holy language. The Egypt it had left behind was not merely foreign, but heathen. So Judah became Yahweh's

peculiar property, Israel Yahweh's seat of government.

The nation was new-born into freedom and made distinct from all other peoples. What gave it liberty and distinction was God. Religion was the root of Israel's nationhood. And, because the root of its nationhood was religion, its new-born freedom was more than the licence of the open desert. The desert was the place of its God's government. Therefore it no sooner reached the liberty of the wilderness than it marched to the mountain of the law, those mountains which trembled at the presence of Yahweh. Israel became a nation through the act of its God, free now to give Him its allegiance, and only free when the allegiance was given. Israel was set apart from the other nations, but its distinctive life was rooted in its loyalty. It was the divine realm.

As the retreat of the Red Sea gave the people liberty, as the mountains leaped at the giving of the law, so Jordan turning back gave Israel Palestine. In his three vivid phrases the poet expresses his conviction that everything which made his people what it was, everything which made its peculiar contribution to the world, came from its religion.

Then he continues that earth and sea may well tremble before Yahweh, who has so greatly displayed His power in the world. Every Hebrew psalmist would have said Amen to the thought of the world

trembling in that august presence, but few among them would have added the reason which this psalm offers for its dismay. They might have dwelt on how Yahweh was the creator of earth and sea, and therefore possessed the right and the power to control both. But this psalmist seems to single out a special incident in the desert-journey which related how Yahweh brought water out of the rock to satisfy His people. Why should he have selected this particular incident, and what connexion did he see between it and the trembling of earth and sea? Above all why did he use the phrase in order to bring his hymn to an abrupt end as though this were the culmination or a natural conclusion of all he had to say? What influenced him was, not primarily the thought of God's power to control nature, but the grateful recognition of the ends for which He does it. He controls it all in the interests of life. Even the flinty rock must yield sap and verdure, because God loves life, because the divine purpose is the well-being of His people.

Passover came to be associated by Israel with the exodus, but in itself it had an older association, which is clear from the date at which it was celebrated. It was and is the Easter spring-festival. Being this, it had its connexion with the newly-dropped lambs and the dull steppes of Judah quickening into green to feed them. The psalmist was poet enough to feel and find room for that motive

to the feast. As a Christian will always make the burden of Easter to be the resurrection which Jesus came to bring to light through His gospel, but will also rob his garden of March daffodils to decorate his church at Eostre, the Hebrew remembered the new life which came to Israel at Passover, but did not forget that Yahweh loves all life and renews it with each returning spring. The psalmist was a Jew steeped in the ideals of his own people : he was also a man with his feet among the springing grass of a Passover morning.

Again what the psalm shows us is Israel supplying its own content to a festival which had other associations, even dangerous associations, with a cruder nature-worship. And the motives which it employs to this end are taken from its conviction that it is possessed of a historic revelation. For here are the same cardinal features of the divine intervention to make Israel a peculiar people, to give it its law, to set it in its land, which appeared in the longer liturgical sketch of its history. To find it here in petto and to recognize its purpose in this Passover hymn is fresh confirmation that it served a religious, not a national end.[1]

[1] It is impossible to carry further the study of the festival-hymns in the psalter. But any who wish to see how this method of approach to these hymns can help to better understanding of their language and their ideas may be advised to read St. John Thackeray's charming contribution to the subject in his Schweich Lectures, 1921.

IV

THE PSALTER AND THE INNER LIFE

The obvious, and certainly the easiest, method of dealing with this subject would be to group together a number of statements which serve to depict the aspirations, beliefs, and sorrows of the Old Testament saints, as these appear in their collected religious hymns. Yet, on the one hand, to select those devout ideals and experiences which are peculiar to the Hebrew mind, and to dwell on what gives them their characteristic quality, would be rather an arid proceeding for you who are not primarily Old Testament students. And, on the other hand, to collect the thoughts of the inner life which belong to all the saints, whether Jewish or Christian, would need to be in other hands than mine, if it were not to result in the obvious.

At the risk, then, of seeming remote from the theme, I mean to try to connect the subject of this lecture with the subject of the last, and to ask how it has come about that a series of hymns, which at first were largely written and which were finally used for the guidance of worshippers in the most sharply defined and separate community in the old world, has become a religious classic in a much wider world and expresses for those who employ it the most

intimate relations between the soul and God. Here is this collection of liturgies, the official guide of one religious communion. Many of them were drafted for the definite purpose of maintaining its peculiar character and marking off its worship by motives which were entirely its own. Thus the man who paid a vow was carefully instructed to call on no other name than Yahweh. As he brought his sacrifice to none except a shrine of his own faith, so he accompanied the gift with words which embodied this faith. The men, too, who united at a great festival heard hymns which connected all their acts of worship with the historic revelation which was Israel's own. When they rejoiced, they rejoiced before Yahweh, not like the other nations.

And, however personal the hymns may be in the sense that they must after all have been written by some man and so must retain the outlook of their writer, they all required to be accepted by the priesthood before their use was authorized for the community. The psalter is no private collection of hymns ; it is official. Every psalm included in it found its place because it proved itself acceptable. And it was acceptable, because it was in agreement with the attitude of Israel's religious leaders. Now these men constituted the most sharply defined community in the ancient world, and were conscious of their position.

Yet these hymns, largely intended for use at the

temple and framed to serve its ritual practice, have been able to separate themselves from their original use, and to maintain themselves in their community's worship after the temple was destroyed and its ritual was discontinued. Not only have they done this in the Jewish communion, but they have passed over into the use of men who know little about the temple except as a matter of dead history, and who do not even know the original purpose for which many of the hymns were written. The Christian communion has always been able to use the psalter with profit and to find in it spiritual solace and guidance. It is one of its manuals for the inner life.

A friend brought home from Mesopotamia a little volume which he said he had picked up in a mosque that had been wrecked by a shell. He recognized it to be printed in some Eastern character, and, thinking it might interest an Old Testament professor, gave it to me. It proved to be a Hebrew prayer-book, printed in Bagdad ; and the wrecked building must have been a synagogue, not a mosque. The volume contained many of the psalms arranged for use in connexion with Jewish worship. It came into my hands about the time when I happened to be spending a holiday at Grasmere ; and there I worshipped in the church beside Wordsworth's grave and heard the psalms being chanted in English according to the usage of the Church of England. The fact served to bring sharply to the mind the

remarkable character of the psalter. It sprang up on the soil of Palestine to guide worshippers at the temple. Yet not only has it never been out of use since the day it was completed, but it has spread to the ends of the earth. And the most alien races with a diverging religious practice can still recite its prayers and thanksgivings with profit. That is a phenomenon which is unique in the history of religion. These hymns, largely framed to serve a local and temporary cult, local because it could only be practised on the soil of Palestine, temporary because it has entirely ceased to be practised anywhere, have succeeded in so penetrating to the permanent relations between the worshipping soul and God that they have survived the purpose for which they came into existence and have continued to be the help of unnumbered souls.

In order to reach any explanation of this remarkable feature of the psalter, it becomes necessary to determine a little more closely the source from which these liturgies came and the attitude or purpose of those who wrote them. The question leads out into a somewhat unexplored field, where a student is constantly reminded of the limitations set to his knowledge. It must also touch on very debatable matter where opinions strongly conflict. Yet it may serve a useful purpose even to raise the question, for it begins to clamour for an answer.

Thus it has been pointed out that the hymns in

the psalter are largely cult-hymns. But it is at once evident that the cult-practice could not in itself have supplied the motives and the themes for the hymns which gathered round it. The fact that these have been able to separate themselves from the cult and even to survive it is enough to make that suggestion more than difficult. Besides, every rite, the mere thing done, admits so many interpretations. Our own rite of the Holy Communion has the bread and wine of the supper at its heart. Wherever a Christian community celebrates its immemorial rite, an intelligent outsider who saw it could determine from what was being done that he was with a body of Christian men. But why this particular thing is done, what the thing done may mean to the worshipper and to the world, what it effects for him who takes part in it, and what it implies as to men's faith in God and His mind toward them—all this is determined, not by the rite itself, but by the forms according to which it is celebrated. And these forms are so different that the meaning of the Holy Communion varies in Christendom from the mass to a memorial ritual of communion. The living church in each case has interpreted its cult through the way in which it is practised. The hymns of the psalter, so far as they are connected with the cult, show how the living church of Judaism interpreted and so remade its ceremonial practices. That, of course, determines

the relative dates of liturgy and ritual: the liturgy has been framed to form the interpretation of the rite in order to adapt it to the needs and interpret it to the mind of the community.

To say such things, however, raises at once the question as to how the two elements in the Jewish cult came into existence. Whence did Judaism derive its ceremonial practice and when did it come to adopt it? And who were the contributors of the specific thought which interpreted the practice? What manner of men were they who embodied the interpretation in cult-hymns, of which the deposit is found in the psalter?

It is easier to find an answer to the later of these questions than to the first. To answer it, it is only necessary to examine the cult-hymns themselves, to study their form and especially to determine the character of the religious thought which informs them all. If these, alike in their form and their thought, show a close similarity to other products of Israel's religious life, it will be a natural inference that both spring from the same source. Now such work as that of Gunkel [1] is making it

[1] In his *Ausgewählte Psalmen*, and *Reden und Aufsätze*, 92 ff. These are the most accessible books for ordinary English readers. And by 'accessible' I mean that they can be thoroughly appreciated by others than specialists. Mowinckel's Studies are raising these and other questions from another side and even more profoundly, but they are rather fitted for Hebrew students than for the ordinary reader.

increasingly clear that the psalter is deeply impregnated with, and everywhere influenced by, the ideals and thoughts of the early prophets. Even in outward form psalm and prophetic oracle frequently resemble one another very closely,[1] and here and there the psalms contain passages which can best be interpreted as oracles that were delivered in connexion with the sacrifices and uttered in the hearing of the assembled worshippers. But especially does this connexion between cult-hymns and prophecy reveal itself in the extent to which the psalter throughout is a-cultic. These liturgies, framed to accompany the sacrifices, are continually turning the thoughts of the worshippers in another direction than that of the ceremonial. And that direction is the attitude of spirit which the great prophets never wearied of repeating to their countrymen. When a processional psalm at a festival period, e.g. ps. 15, defined the true temper of all who took part to be the possession of clean hands and a pure heart, when it even condescended to demand such social virtues as the non-practice of usury, its teaching ran along the lines of prophetic doctrine.[2]

The recognition, however, of this character of the

[1] Cf. psalms 93, 97, 82 at pp. 31 ff. supra.

[2] It is occasionally stated that the psalter is not only a-cultic, but is even anti-cultic. The proof is found in such a psalm as 50 with its apparent rejection of all sacrifice in 9 ff. The conclusion seems to me to rest on a mistaken exegesis of the psalm. But, while anti-cultic is an exaggeration, a-cultic is a justifiable description.

psalter will force a reconsideration of a great deal which has long been accepted by modern criticism. The commonly received opinion about the origin and date of the ceremonial law has been that which was originally laid down by Kuenen.[1] He declared that the Priestly Code which embodies this ritual practice was framed by the priests during the exile and introduced by Ezra after the return. Accordingly, it was one of the latest sections of the Old Testament. Its connexion with the work of the prophets was determined by Wellhausen to be a purely external one. The prophets had succeeded in lodging on the thought of Israel that suffering, and especially the disaster of exile, was the penalty for sin. In response to this the people demanded to know the will of their God in order that, knowing it and obeying it, they might be secure from a similar catastrophe. The ceremonial law was the reply of their religious leaders to this demand.

Since, then, the psalter is integrally bound up with this law and was largely framed to accompany it, the inevitable result of placing the code in the period of the return has been to throw the psalter into a still later period. Duhm does not hesitate to carry its final composition into the time of the Maccabees. Others seek a date for a large number of the psalms in the years between the return from exile and the Maccabean rising. The latter period

[1] *Historisch-Kritisch Onderzoek.*

certainly has one great advantage to commend it for such a purpose. Since nothing is known about Israel's inner life then, it is possible to put into those years anything we find it inconvenient to place elsewhere.

But, apart from other grave difficulties which do not concern us in our present study, the difficulty about placing the psalter in either of these periods is that it thus becomes impossible to account for its peculiar character. For the period after the exile was a period in which, it is generally stated, prophecy had ceased, and apocalyptic, which is believed to follow an entirely different course, was beginning to take its place. Even if the movement which produced prophecy had not wholly ceased to influence men's minds in Israel, and though there may have remained a reverence for its great products in the past, the situation regarding the origin of the psalter is not improved. For it remains necessary to ask how a generation which adopted the ceremonial law as its sufficient rule of life, or a later generation which under that influence was growing more and more legalistic in its religious attitude, came to write for its ritual a series of liturgies which reveal the strongly a-cultic and prophetic character which runs through so many of the psalms.

The origin of the psalter must be sought very much earlier. Its beginnings must be looked for in the period when the influence of the prophets was

at its strongest, and, in particular, when they were submitting the ancestral cult of their people to a searching criticism in the light of their own conceptions of the divine character and nature, of God's relation to and demands on men. Some of that criticism may have been so drastic as to imply a desire on the part of some of the prophets to abolish the cult altogether. But, even if it could be proved that this was their desire, it remains certain that they did not succeed, for the cult was continued and even came to hold a larger position in the life of the nation. What the prophetic influence succeeded in bringing about was a compromise, which appears in the liturgical psalms that were added to the ritual service.

The men who were responsible for the religious life of Israel retained a great part of the old sacrificial and festival practice, for rites of this character are the last thing which a religious people ever surrenders. But, while they retained the rites, they fitted them with psalms which sought to re-interpret the ritual and adapt it to the prophetic ideals and teaching.

The ceremonial law, however, represents largely the ancestral practice of Israel. Ezra, if he introduced any, introduced no new law. For the return after the exile was essentially an early Zionist movement. The men who return to settle in Palestine to-day are not, as a rule, reform Jews who believe that men

may serve the God of their fathers under any sky. They are more frequently the talmudic Jews, whose aim it is to maintain the customs of the fathers, and who hope in Palestine to be free from the hindrances which now prevent them from fulfilling them. So the men who came back with Nehemiah were not the Babylonian Jews who had learned from Jeremiah that they could serve God even while serving the country to which He had caused them to be carried captive. They were the men who counted the sacrificial system of the temple essential to their faith. What prompted them to come back was the desire to practise this at Jerusalem. And the customs they desired to follow, and which they returned in order to follow, were not a ceremonial law which had been framed the day before and constituted the newest portion of the torah. It was the ritual which their fathers had fulfilled in the holy city. The situation with what it implied is only brought out more clearly when it is recognized that the first effort at restoring the temple was made by the men who had not gone into exile at all, but had remained in Judah. What these men sought to restore was the custom of the past to which their hearts clung. It is not easy to believe that they quietly accepted, for the practice at the altar which they were the first to restore, a ritual which had been drafted by priests in the exile and in the preparation of which they had had no share.

Only they now practised all this according to the earlier liturgies of the psalter. And the hymns which explained why they fulfilled these rites, what they hoped to gain through them, and what they believed about the God in whose honour they sacrificed and went in procession, were already saturated with the teaching of the great prophets. These ritual-hymns set the norm for the liturgical service of the temple. And when the later hymns came to be written to meet new deeds, or the older hymns were re-cast to serve new conditions, they followed the great lines of interpretation which had already been laid down.

To regard the psalter as thus having its origin in a compromise between the priestly tradition and the prophetic thought is, however, to conceive prophet and priest in old Israel to have been closely associated in a common task and capable of learning from and influencing each other. Such a view runs counter to a prevailing tendency in Old Testament criticism which, to speak broadly, insists on a sharp cleavage between the two. But this tendency is the unfortunate inheritance of the Hegelianism which Wellhausen, through his brilliant theory of the course of development of Judaism, has succeeded in lodging on the whole method of approach to the subject. Kegel in his recent pamphlet [1] has done

[1] It has been translated by Mrs. Nolloth and published by John Murray, 1924.

a certain service by recalling to attention the extent to which this position is based on the Hegelian philosophy and reproduces in one special field its general view of history. The recognition of the fact cannot be called novel, for Wellhausen himself acknowledged the extent of his debt to Vatke; and every reader of Vatke's forgotten book [1] discovers, not only that the germ of Wellhausen's reconstruction is already there, but that the theory of both scholars is ultimately no more than the application of Hegelian ideas of history to the special field of the origin and development of Hebrew religion. What needed to be emphasized by Kegel was, not this general and somewhat vague fact, but a more specific recognition of the way in which this large theory, borrowed from a prevalent philosophy and superimposed from without on the study of the Hebrew documents, has succeeded in blinding the eyes of students to the actual facts of history which these contain. Applied in the field of the New Testament, the same philosophical view of history, in the hands of the Tübingen school, regarded early Christianity as a synthesis of the two antitheses of Pauline and Petrine theology. In the interests of their theory they exaggerated the opposition between these two movements in the Apostolic church. And New Testament study has only advanced to a better appreciation of the facts of

[1] *Die Religion des Alten Testamentes*, 1835.

the apostolic period since it ceased to look at these through Hegel's spectacles. In the same way Vatke, followed by Wellhausen, regarded Judaism as the synthesis of the two antitheses of the priestly and prophetic conceptions of religion. The result has been to exaggerate the opposition between the two, and to make students of the Old Testament ignore the way in which prophet and priest are brought into close association in all their work, and the extent to which they mutually influenced each other. Prophetic ideas and ideals permeate even into the most intimate recesses of the Priestly Code. But the most outstanding illustration is to be found in the psalter. For these liturgies, framed largely to serve the uses of the priest, are everywhere saturated with the thought of the prophet.

One could wish to follow this out in certain other directions. But it is necessary to restrict attention to the question which has been raised in this lecture. In all the liturgies which appear in the psalter the stress is not laid on what the cult in itself can do. Rather, on the one hand, emphasis is laid on the character of the God to whom the worshipper brings his devotion and on what He is willing to do for the salvation of His people. On the other hand, it is laid on the right temper of the worshipper, when he fulfils his ritual act. The act of the cult becomes no more than the meeting-place of these two lines of thought. The emphasis does not rest on the

mere *opus operatum* of the rite, nor even on the correct method of its fulfilment. All that is either taken for granted or passed over as negligible: at least it is ignored. What makes the burden of the cult-hymns is the inner life of the worshipper. The psalm, which he repeats or hears recited in connexion with each sacrificial rite, guides him to worthy thoughts about the God to whom it is offered, and it helps him to examine his own conscience and to express his inward needs.

Now it is precisely this character of the liturgical hymns which serves to explain the singular phenomenon which formed the starting-point of this lecture, but from which it may seem to have hopelessly wandered. Because the psalter takes this attitude, it has been able to detach itself from the rites in connexion with which it was written, and to continue as a book of devotion among men who never offered a Jewish sacrifice and never will. If its interest had been only in the outward forms of its religion, it would have remained a mere national prayer-book. It would then have formed an interesting evidence of a stage in religious development which men have long passed, but which they would have studied with the detached interest with which they turn over similar ritual hymns that have survived from Babylonia and Egypt. But, because its weight was thrown upon the inner life,

and because its thoughts about God and the right method of approach to Him are those of the prophets, and are therefore still allied to our own, we approach the psalter as we approach no similar book of an ancient faith. We can still use much which it contains for the guidance and solace of our own souls.[1]

[1] In this connexion it is interesting and instructive to notice the attitude of later Judaism to certain parts of the ceremonial law and to the psalter respectively. Both of these factors in the people's religious life were closely connected with the temple worship and the sacrificial system. Many precepts of the ceremonial law were concerned with the things which defiled a man and so prevented him from taking part in the ritual-worship of his people. As such, they were little more than a series of primitive tabus, representing and continuing the ancestral customs and ideas which had persisted in the nation from its beginning. Behind them lay old, obstinate conceptions of God and of His relation to men which were outgrown by the community. The liturgies of the psalter were also connected with the same cult, but dwelt on the inner life of the worshippers along lines derived from the prophetic teaching.

When the temple was destroyed and its worship came to an end, the rabbis continued both the ceremonial law and the psalms into the new life of Jewry. With the psalter they had no difficulty. Its praise and prayer passed over naturally into the services of the synagogue and were largely incorporated into the prayer-book. Evidently, however, they had difficulty in justifying the retention of much of the ceremonial law. It had lost its *raison-d'être*. And the embarrassed rabbis could offer no better rationale for it than to say that it had been commanded to Israel by Yahweh. One cannot avoid the suspicion that many of the leaders of the community would fain have been rid of it. But it had wound itself into the life of Israel, and the people clung to it with the tenacity with which religious communities cling to the observances of the past. It

In laying weight on the attitude of the soul of the worshipper rather than on the *opus operatum* of the rite, the psalter took essentially the position of the prophets. What these religious teachers above all stood for was that the spirit of man in its dim way through life could find God. Because they had done this for themselves and entered into the secret of the Lord, they believed themselves to have a commission to their people. And evermore, as he submitted himself to the divine standards for life, the prophet came to know better the mind of Him who revealed Himself and His will to Israel. As he found God, the man found himself, his moral personality, his life-work, his place and function in the world. Finding himself, he came to realize that the spirit of man, living by the divine standards and after the divine guidance, was dear to the Almighty. It was that in the universe on which God expended His peculiar care.

But further, the prophet did not conceive that this power or privilege belonged to him as a creature apart from other men. Whatever may have been the case in the remote past, the men came to realize that their fellowship with their God was not reserved to those who were endowed with certain

served too, no doubt, to mark off Israel from the surrounding world and to maintain its distinctive character. This part of the ceremonial law, however, was felt to need a rationale for its continuance: the psalter needed none.

mysterious qualities or who could claim peculiar experiences like audition or vision, which were beyond the reach of ordinary men. For Isaiah, when he received his commission, declared himself to be a man of unclean lips, dwelling among a people of unclean lips. What then became his in the hour of his call was within the reach of all who were conscious of the same unfitness for the divine presence. And a later generation, when it put into the mouth of Moses the prayer 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets',[1] evidently regarded that desired consummation to be possible. Any man in Israel could accept the divine values for life and commit himself to them. When he did, he found himself and his function in this world. His life, too, came to be under the charge of the Almighty.

That is also the commanding attitude of the psalter. Because it holds no other, the inner life is its chief concern. Through this inner life the worshipper comes into intimate relation to God. Through this he learns to know how greatly he is an object of the divine care. Only the psalter connected the inner life, to an extent that the prophets did not do, with the sacrificial and ritual practice which was the appointed means for its people's approach to God and for His approach to them. The result was a compromise.

There are several lines along which it would be

[1] Num. 11 : 29.

possible to follow out this compromise and to recognize the difficulties to which it led. The most remarkable is to be seen in the new content which the prophetic conceptions brought into the thought of sin. Much has been written in a very loose way about the deepened sense of sin which grew up in the Jewish community after the exile, and about the new position which the sin-offering came consequently to take in its sacrificial system. But no sufficient attention has been given to the character of the acts which the ceremonial law called sins, and for which alone it provided atonement through its sacrifices. Yet, to select only one case which brings the underlying ideas very prominently to notice, this system required a woman who had borne a child to present a sin-offering, before she could touch any hallowed thing or come into the sanctuary (Lev. c. 12). The result was that Mary, when she had borne Jesus Christ, must bring a sin-offering before she was fit to return to the worshipping community.[1]

To call a law which pronounced motherhood to need atonement the evidence and the outcome of a deepened sense of sin is to be at the mercy of a mere misuse of language. In the many instances of sin-offerings, of which this is but one illustration, we are obviously in a world of ideas which belong to the most primitive conceptions about God and

[1] St. Luke 2 : 24.

about that which qualifies a man to approach God. These offerings are meant to remove physical impurity. And the means of cleansing was physical and external like the impurity which required to be removed. Naturally, when men conceived thus of sin along the lines of physical impurity rather than moral transgression, they recognized that a man might contract an uncleanness which made him unfit for any share in worship without any intention on his part or even without his knowledge. A man who touched a dead body became ceremonially unclean, but the act might have been wholly involuntary on his part. A woman in certain normal functions of her life was rendered unfit for any approach to the sanctuary, but the condition was due to no choice on her part. These uncleannesses were committed or contracted בשגגה, to use the technical language of the ceremonial law, an expression which is perhaps best rendered by *per incuriam*, or 'through inadvertence'. And it was to atone for these, and only for these, that the sin-offering was valid. Num. 15 : 22–31 definitely prescribes that, when the congregation or an individual in it has contracted uncleanness through inadvertence, a sin-offering must be provided in order to make the necessary atonement. But it further definitely orders that any man who sins ביד רמה, that is voluntarily and with the knowledge of what he has done, can find no means of atonement. In such

a case that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Now the more men learned to conceive of God and of their relation to God along the ethical lines of the prophetic thought, the more obvious it became to them that sin was any deed or purpose which hurt the moral personality and interrupted the soul's relation to God. The more also it became clear that uncleannesses, which could be contracted inadvertently and which involved no act of will, were not sins at all. Yet the sacrificial system of old Israel was radically bound up with the conception of sin as physical uncleanness, since it offered atonement only for sins of inadvertence. The fundamental opposition between the two lines of thought emerged in the troubled consciences of the men who had made their own the prophetic conception of their relation to God. What troubled these men was that through their own voluntary act they had sinned. Their transgression had not been inadvertent, nor had it been committed in ignorance. They had sinned with their will. The sacrificial system could offer such men no help.

Only when one recognizes this, can one quite measure the meaning and the power of the penitential psalms, especially of psalm 51. For there what makes the depth of the writer's contrition is his recognition that he has sinned with knowledge and through a fatal weakness of will. He even sadly

recognizes that the taint belongs to him as a member of the human family, for all men's lives reveal the same condition. Because this is his view of his sin, he naturally says that for his case Yahweh desires not sacrifice. The sacrificial system was framed to meet the condition of men who had sinned *per incuriam.* The liturgies of Israel show more than a compromise: they show its weakness on the ultimate question of sin.

But adequately to discuss this question would involve an amount of technical detail which makes it unsuitable for a lecture. It is enough to have suggested it for your own thought, and to turn to another line along which it is possible to follow the developing religious thought of the psalter, viz., the approach to clearer grasp of individual immortality. That aspect of the subject may the more commend itself, because the idea of personal immortality constitutes the final test as to how men think about the value of the inner life and of their relation to God. Is the inner life of the soul so great that it endures and reveals itself to be the ultimate reality?

Psalm 91, then, is a well-known hymn which speaks of how, because the soul sets its hope on God and commits itself to His guidance, He will deliver it. It can tread securely on the lion and the adder. God's angels will bear their charge upon their wings, lest by any chance the man dash his foot against a stone. When it is taken literally, the psalm

is patently at variance with all experience. Many good men, whose trust in God was very real, have stumbled heavily over the rough stones of life. The lion, before it springs, and the adder, before it strikes, do not stop to consider whether their prey fears God or not. And the man who wrote the psalm probably knew all this as well as any one else. But many a young parson, fresh from College and very conscious of this difficulty in connexion with the psalm, and consequently embarrassed in his personal use of it, may well be puzzled to explain to himself why he should find it so great a favourite, especially with devout women. He will find it selected by some old woman, whose feet have been heavily bruised on life's rocky ways. He will be asked to read it to some other, about whom he knows that the last thing she either desired or expected was to tread on any lion or adder, because she had learned to desire something greater which only her Master could give. And if he is patient and teachable, he may discover that these, with the intuition which is often given to good women, have pierced to the real meaning of the psalmist. What the writer was intent to express was that which has been called by Dutch theologians the *providentia specialississima* of the Almighty. In the terms of his own time and in Eastern imagery the psalmist embodied his sense of the infinite worth of the inner life through its hold on God. This human life, conscious of being

set among the many hazards of the world, conscious too of its impotence to overcome them, could yet reach up to Him who was over all and make Him its own. Because of this it was secure. For it, above all else in man's transitory and mutable life, was an object of care to God. The soul of man was ultimate in its value.

For the present study it makes little difference whether the psalm be regarded as early or late. Even if it should be relegated to a late period, it is only the expression in vigorous terms of a conviction which came much earlier. And the influence of this attitude to human life can be traced in two directions. On the one side, there were men who were convinced believers in this doctrine of their faith, but who held the old position about the future. They regarded all men, whatever their life on earth had been, as passing after death into Sheol, which was not a place of reward and punishment, but still remained destitute of moral distinctions. And how the estimation of life as capable of fellowship with God influenced their attitude is vividly expressed in psalm 90 which, with all its apparent contradiction, strikes precisely the same note.[1]

The psalmist dwells on the brevity and weakness

[1] I must consider only vv. 1–12 to have formed the original psalm. The remaining verses appear to be a liturgical addition. These were added in order to adapt the psalm to the faith of a later time, which had come to hold a different view of the future.

of man's life. Seventy years fill out its span, so fugitive is it before the ages of the world. And if occasionally it should reach eighty years, the gain is not great, since the result is only to placard the weakness into which the old man falls. Then, when its years, few or many, are over, it passes out into the dark. But at once, with one of the finest acts of courage even in the Old Testament, which is one of the world's courageous books and never whimpers, the psalmist adds his petition. Since this is the destined lot of man, what then? Help us, O Lord, to make the best of life. And the best that life can give to a man who through all trusts in God is a wise heart. For the ultimate product of life, however transient and feeble it may be, is this heart of wisdom, this inner life of man. And it is within his power to win it, if he gallantly lives out his days to the end in the fear of God, accepting the divine valuations, submitting to the divinely appointed limitations, and never yielding to the temptation to let everything go. Even if it leads to nothing beyond and passes like a breath, it remains the ultimate thing.

But it was inevitable that a conviction which posited the inner life of man as of final worth could not rest there. Hence it led out directly, on the other side, to the faith that this life, with the relation

Hence in them one finds the eschatological note about the return of Yahweh to His people, which contributed largely to clearer thought on individual immortality.

to God which it implied and which alone made it possible, could not be brought to nothing by the accident of death. As it could triumph over the weaknesses of time, so it must triumph in the end. That is the conviction which is expressed in psalm 16.

Here it is necessary to insist on the unique character of the hymn and to recognize that in some respects it stands alone and refuses to be classed along with others. Gunkel and Stärk have done a great service to the interpretation of the psalms by pointing out that they can be classified into groups and that each individual psalm gains much through being studied alongside others of a similar character. But they have not wholly escaped from the weakness which generally attends men who have struck out a new and fruitful line of study. In their eagerness to recognize similarities which would justify such grouping, they have sometimes slurred the differences which are often of equal importance with the likeness.

Now psalm 16 cannot be counted merely one of a common type of psalms in which the writer prays to be delivered from serious sickness or bodily danger. Because they start with this foregone decision with regard to its character and purpose, many interpreters naturally conclude that, when the psalmist comes to speak about Sheol and deliverance from Sheol, he must be expecting no more than recovery from sickness with its resultant escape

from the imminent peril of death. What gives an apparent support to this is that the psalm opens with a prayer for preservation. But two features of the petition warn a student against this hasty inference. Thus the opening prayer: Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust (v. 1): is not pursued nor resumed at the close of the hymn, which is the general practice in similar hymns of supplication. Instead the writer passes on into a quiet meditation which is destitute of all complaint or distress. Besides, the language of the opening petition has its own character. Psalms which are born out of peculiar need open with prayer for special help, for deliverance, for restoration.[1] They then enforce their petition by detailing the condition to which the writer has been reduced. The psalmist here asks for no more than the gift of Yahweh to every faithful Israelite, the preservation which is the expected lot of every one who trusted in Him. He is asking for no special grace because of any peculiar need; he asks for no more than all his fellows may plead for and expect.

Hence he follows up his petition by no tale of distress, no story of sickness, no picture of his horror before Sheol with the absence of God's light which it was held to imply. Instead of this, he deliberately speaks about his lot in life as good and his heritage as among the fairest. Hitherto his God has

[1] Cf. e.g., 6, 12, 22, 31.

preserved him. And the charm of this good lot has consisted to him in his knowledge that he received it from God, and in it all could find God. God was present to him all through his appointed earthly condition; and, because God was found by him there, this condition satisfied him. Nay more, God guided him in it so that he knew himself to be not merely upheld, but instructed by the divine wisdom. Nightly his thoughts gave him good counsel. They gave him this, because he set the Lord always before him. He lived in the presence of his God, submitting himself to the valuations for life which this implied. Life to him was rich and full and satisfying, because it was lived by standards which were not of this world. Being that, it was of ultimate value.

Therefore he adds, very quietly and very simply, the ground of his confidence that all this cannot come to an end through the accident of death. For God will show him still what He has shown him throughout his earthly career, the path of life which, according to Prov. 3 : 17, is at once the path to life and the path in which alone a real life can be found. And how rich and full this must be, since it comes from no other than his God, he expresses in his final saying, 'at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore' (v. 11). For these enduring pleasures are in the hand of God, not to keep, but to give away. Even as the heritage which belonged to him during his

lifetime was a gift of God and was satisfying because it came from Him, so the future, whatever it might hold, was of the divine giving and should be no more meagre than the past. The one was as sure and full as the other, because God preserves them that trust in Him.

So what fills the writer's mind is not merely that he has committed himself to God, but that God has accepted the trust and will not fail to keep faith. He has made human life in its fullness and in its reality. The men who take life out of His hands and acknowledge their dependence on Him for guidance as to how it should be lived find it satisfying. God will not suffer all this to come to an end in the cul-de-sac of death, for what is of real must be of enduring worth.

The psalm forms to-day part of the funeral service in the Jewish community. But its peculiar interest for the immediate subject of our study does not so much consist in its teaching about individual immortality as in the line along which it approaches that conviction. It is the culmination of the attitude on human destiny which appears throughout the psalter. (In this strange and varied existence, where men seek after all manner of good, and either gain that on which they have set their hearts or miss it, the one final reality is the soul of man, learning to know God's will, gaining God's forgiveness for error and sin, growing in content

and peace. This men can gain through their worship of Him. At the sanctuary of Yahweh a man wins his soul through renewing his faith in and his hold on convictions which this world does not supply. Winning it he becomes conqueror over the world.

That inner life is within man's reach, and it is the ultimate reality. Because it believes this, the psalter has remained through the centuries the book of the inner life. It believes in the worth of the soul.

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